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JOINT FORCES STAFF COLLEGE
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SOF: A Joint Force Integrator

by

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A paper submitted to the Faculty of the Joint Advanced Warfighting School in partial satisfaction of the requirements of a Master of Science Degree in Joint Campaign Planning and Strategy.

The contents of this paper reflect my own personal views and are not necessarily endorsed by the Joint Forces Staff College or the Department of Defense.

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5 April 2007

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ABSTRACT

The 2006 QDR points to a globalized environment that is clouded by catastrophic, disruptive, and irregular threats which necessitate a national security strategy that not only offers military solutions, but incorporates the joint, interagency and multinational communities as well. However, the military is currently the only organization sourced and manned to lead this integrated effort to protect, prevent and prevail. In the context of today's operational environment, the military is often viewed pejoratively and should only be used when all other means have failed.

This study will argue that special operations forces offer an incremental option in which military capabilities exist, but the presence is minimized, if not transparent. SOF offer unique skill sets, both kinetic and non-kinetic, that can shape the environment, integrate Joint forces, and conduct tactical actions with strategic results.

The United States' Special Operations Forces must develop mutually interdependent relationships with conventional forces, multinational partners and interagency forces, and therein synchronize both kinetic and non-kinetic efforts throughout the operational environment to defeat its enemies and achieve the national strategic objectives.

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1. INTRODUCTION

*The dogmas of the quiet past are inadequate to the stormy present.
The occasion is piled high with difficulty, and we must rise with the occasion.
As our case is new, so must we think anew and act anew.¹*

-- President Abraham Lincoln

There can be little doubt that the United States must employ all elements of national power in the current generation of globalization to advance and protect its interests. As the world's lone remaining military superpower, it wields a tremendous responsibility to not only pursue its national and international strategy, but to protect the rest of the world from oppression and tyranny. Given the current context of global instability, the United States bears the comprehensive burden of advancing the pillars upon which its national security strategy is founded:

1. Promotion of freedom, justice, and human dignity
2. Confronting the challenges of our time (pandemic disease, proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, terrorism, human trafficking, and natural disasters)²

In many fashions, using military power may be inappropriate or unacceptable to states, regions and ideologies, thus pressing the governing administration to utilize other elements of power such as diplomacy, economics, and information campaigns. At the same time, certain instances or situations *may* still require the United States to employ its military as either a proactive or retroactive measure. In the case of the modern terrorist threat that has existed since before the 1990s, but reached a crescendo with the attacks on

¹ Address to Congress in 1862.

² President, *National Security Strategy* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 16 March 2006), ii.

September 11th, 2001,³ the United States primarily responded with military action to defeat the borderless enemy that attacked the homeland (Global War on Terrorism). Future threats may develop in just as vague a manner, and support from the international community may not be as forthcoming as it was in late 2001. The United States can ill-afford to fritter away its Department of Defense options when it comes to maintaining a presence around the globe as both a means of deterrence and advanced warning of impending failures of governments and states. Nor can it continue to afford the forward basing of large military formations throughout the world. Indeed, many Koreans and Iraqis would like to see the redeployment of American troops and equipment beyond their national borders. Perhaps responding to this new reality, the Office of the Secretary of Defense is leading a department-wide effort to withdraw many forward-based military units back to the continental United States. That accomplished, the United States must continue to remain engaged with partner nations and other states to preserve strategic options should the global situation dictate. It must maintain a delicate balance between enacting its strategy through diplomatic and economic means while maintaining a military capability ready to defeat its enemies and their objectives.

Planners, analysts, and theorists spend countless amounts of time trying to understand the international political climate to prepare for the next area of unrest or “hotspot.” Where will the next threat lie? At home or in distant lands? Who or what will it be? Nation-state or rogue actor? How will subsequent conflicts manifest themselves? Classically or unconventionally? In the near term, one could argue that the most significant threat facing the United States is not a state actor, but another ideological radical similar to al Qaeda, working independently or for a government. Given that other

³ Heretofore referred to as “9/11.”

elements of national power will likely not be able to singularly defeat this type of threat, and understanding that neither the international community, nor the American public, will tolerate a continuous deployment of significant military formations to combat this amorphous threat, the U.S. must look to its unconventional options to provide intelligence, training, irregular and unconventional warfare, and non-kinetic as well as kinetic methods to combat this disruptive, irregular, and catastrophically burgeoning menace.⁴

This leads to the paradigm certain to face our nation in this post-Cold War period, particularly in the near term – asymmetric threats. No doubt, it will be some time before any state has the means to threaten the United States as a peer militarily. But that certainly did not deter the ability of al Qaeda from inflicting significant damage to the United States’ infrastructure, financial system, and national morale. United States Special Operations Forces (SOF) are uniquely organized, trained, equipped, and resourced to deter, dissuade, and defeat such a threat throughout the continuum of conflict (Figure 1). They, better than any other national asset, provide the commander-in-chief with options for combating a menace not conventionally threatening to the nation; but history has shown they cannot go it alone.

⁴ “Disruptive, irregular, and catastrophic” refer to the threats of the future identified by the Joint Staff as published in various forms to include the 2005 QDR as well as several key briefings. They form the corners of the “quad chart” which is exhibited later in Figure 5.

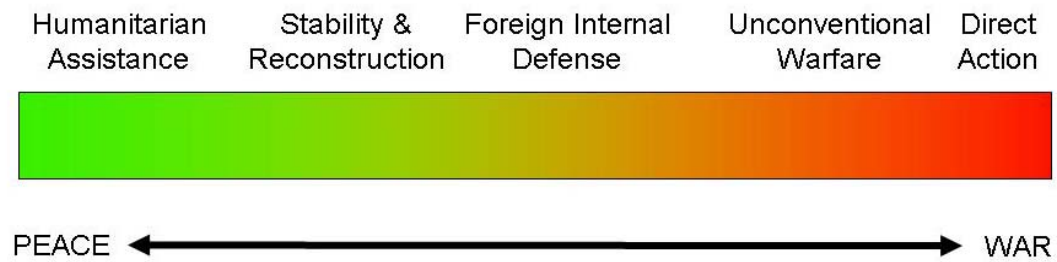


Figure 1. Conflict Continuum

The United States' Special Operations Forces must develop mutually interdependent relationships with conventional forces, multinational partners and interagency forces, and therein synchronize both kinetic and non-kinetic efforts throughout the operational environment to defeat its enemies and achieve the national strategic objectives.

Ultimately, this study will acknowledge that while the United States has a strong military arm, and therein a unique and versatile capability in SOF, these forces must do a better job of working with conventional units and interagency partners to capitalize on the broad range of assets available to achieve the ends required by our national strategy. Failure to do so will result in less potential military capability and continued stagnant stove-piping throughout the DoD and interagency community, not dissimilar to the parochialism exposed within the intelligence community before the 9/11 attacks. In looking at the world's political and economic climate, the study will take a deeper look into the onset of globalism, its expansion (globalization), and the impact on international affairs. It will analyze both the positive and negative derivatives of globalism and their associations with the current and future world context.

After setting a brief context of the environment, this study will explore the unique nature of the current threats facing the United States in the first decade of the new millennium. Who is the present enemy and what are his objectives? Identifying the threat as something other than a typical peer, how do we address and defeat it? The study will argue that SOF alone cannot handle the sheer volume of enemy threats in this realm, thereby necessitating collaboration with conventional forces and the various element of national power to defeat this burgeoning menace.

To prevent lessons from the past being repeated in the future, the study will explore the resurgence and organization of Special Operations Forces (literally a baptism by fire) and the reshaping of the Defense Department to make it more effective as a singular force and as an integral member of the interagency community. It will address SOF relevance to both the present and the future as a key instrument of the military arm of our national power and also how it acts in a diplomatic and informational role. It will examine the reasons for past failures and what has been done to date to ensure they are never again repeated.

The study will particularly focus on the inherently joint nature of special operations forces and their ability to leverage other agency and service capabilities and resources to collectively combat international threats. It will further show how special operations forces are uniquely suited to achieve strategic objectives through tactical (level) operations.

In conclusion, this study will have shown first that, while admittedly capable and daring, Special Operations Forces should not act alone and cannot rely solely on kinetic options for defeating the future threats to our national security and interests. The

Department of Defense must first seek to leverage its preemptive or deterrent options to deny enemy opportunities to act. U.S. Special Operations Command (USSOCOM) has a significant role in exploiting some of these critical kinetic, but more so its non-kinetic requirements. Second, SOF retains a unique capability to operate in a dynamic environment, shaping operations to meet the demands of the US national strategy. SOF must apply past lessons to current situations to avoid the pitfalls of neglecting history and repeating its mistakes. Truthfully, SOF is one of the Defense Department's most joint institutions. Still, by nature of the intelligence it gathers, by nature of the secrecy in which it operates, and by nature of its inherent missions, SOF tends to operate alone and only integrate when other elements have something to offer and a need to know. This cloak of secrecy must be retained, but with certain realistic limits. Special Operations Forces must integrate with conventional forces, they must assimilate with host national elements, they must retain both kinetic and non-kinetic skills, and they must synchronize throughout the joint, interagency and multinational community to enact the strategy of the United States.

Before discussing the role of Special Operations as it applies to the national strategy of the United States, one must understand the environment, the threat, and the factors which shape the global milieu. Globalization certainly redefined the size and scope of what once seemed to be a vast, expansive planet.

2. A GLOBALIZED ENVIRONMENT: EXPANDING TRADE, ENABLING THE THREAT

Nearly everyone in the world has been affected by globalization, but for some peoples and cultures, the changes have washed over them faster than they can adapt.⁵

– General Tony Zinni

Before examining the role of military operations in the context of today's non-linear, asymmetric world, one must first understand the environment in which the actors operate. This can best be addressed by this somewhat modern term: globalization,

the worldwide integration and increasing flows of trade, capital, ideas, and people. Until 9/11, the U.S. Government tended to identify globalization primarily as an economic rule set, but thanks to the global war on terrorism, we now understand that it likewise demands clear enunciation and enforcement of a security rule set as well.⁶

Since the early days of the second millennium, and arguably much earlier as well, merchants used naval vessels to span the seas and conduct free trade among nations and peoples. This led to a mixing of races and cultures, expansion of ideas and technologies, and educational growth thought to make the world more aware. In the modern era this mixing, expansion and growth continue on an exponential and unprecedented scale, but in a deranged fashion it also promotes the negative attributes of differences: contempt, jealousy, and hatred to name a few. Globalization is a concept that must be considered to establish a framework for the environment we face at the beginning of the twenty-first century. It is a critical notion addressed by modern theorists, strategists and economists to include Samuel Huntington, Thomas Barnett, Joseph Nye and Thomas Friedman to name a few of the more prominent authors. It is similarly addressed by the Department of Defense in the 2005 Quadrennial Defense Review:

⁵ Tony Zinni and Tony Koltz, *The Battle for Peace*, (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2006), 53-54.

⁶ Thomas Barnett, *Blueprint for Action*, (New York: Putnam, 2005), xvi-xvii.

Globalization enables many positive developments such as the free movement of capital, goods, and services, information, people and technology, but it is also accelerating the transmission of disease, the transfer of advanced weapons, the spread of extremist ideologies, the movement of terrorists and the vulnerability of major economic segments.⁷

Globalization became an economic windfall, equalizing the playing field allowing small companies to compete with the giants, emerging nations to equal larger established neighbors, and individuals to impact the masses. *Economic* globalization leveled the table, as economic columnist and author Thomas Friedman so aptly named his latest book, *The World is Flat*.⁸ This “flattening” has similarly raised the ability for once-feeble rogue actors to threaten and attack larger, previously insurmountable, nations. Whereas world trade continues to rise at an unprecedented and astronomical rate, so too does the ability for rogue actors to collaborate and move people and assets around the world to achieve strategic objectives.

This chapter will explore the environment, elaborating on the uniqueness of the modern era. Furthermore, it will demonstrate how asymmetric threats call for different methods to deter, detect, and defeat the threat. As outlined in the NATO’s Strategic Vision (2004), the Supreme Allied Commander Europe in conjunction with the Supreme Allied Commander Transformation stated: “The key drivers that will effect the future strategic environment are globalization, the increasing sophistication of asymmetric

⁷ Department of Defense, *Quadrennial Defense Review* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 2006), 24.

⁸ Thomas Friedman’s premise in *The World is Flat* is that globalization has recently shifted and accelerated the way the world operates economically, ideologically, and socially. Companies and countries alike must adapt to the changing pace, and individual actors can now compete with the giants of their industry.

warfare, the effects of changing demography and environment, failing states, radical ideologies and unresolved conflicts.”⁹

Whereas sovereign states once dominated the world order, the current context empowers not only state governments and rulers, but corporations, organizations, and sometimes individual actors equally. Think of how Microsoft Corporation has impacted businesses’ abilities to communicate, enhance efficiencies, and empower midlevel managers with strategic decisions within their domain. Take for example how pop culture stars such as movie actors and singers visit heads of state in foreign countries to promote their social agendas, like them or not. Consider the number of young Muslim men who adhere to the radical ideology promoted by the likes of individuals such as Zawahiri and bin Laden. “Nationalism and national sovereignty no longer carry either the force or the physical and cultural integrity they once did.”¹⁰ Things are different.

Undoubtedly, the global nature of the world can be referenced by a changing military and political climate as well. Based on the modernization of militaries, the technological leaps made by networked organization, and the awesome scale in which nations can reach out to each other, for better or worse, numerous military theorists have attempted to copyright this era: *4GW – 4th Generation Warfare* (Thomas Hammes), the *Third Wave War* (Alvin and Heidi Toffler), *Asymmetric Warfare*, *NetCentric Warfare* (Arthur Cebrowski), and the *Complex and Distributed Battlespace* outlined in the QDR. While each of these theories has its own merits, they all point to a future context in which actors will impose wills upon one another through unconventional and irregular methods. How does the nation address this dilemma? Can the United States continue to take a

⁹ J.L. Jones, GEN, USA and E.P. Giambastiani, ADM, USN, *Strategic Vision: The Military Challenge*, (NATO Publication, August 2004), p. iii.

¹⁰ Zinni and Koltz, 55.

unilateral military approach to solving international instabilities? Perhaps so, but would it be prudent and effective?

From a military perspective, the United States has historically relied on its hard power – the ability to use the carrots and stick method to make others follow your will; however, it must proceed with caution since it very well might alienate the rising powers of the globalized world. Therefore, the United States must seek to engage international partners with its soft power – the ability to influence others to get the outcomes you want through attraction rather than coercion.¹¹ This will not only provide a better sentiment from the international community, but it will also be a more effective method of waging policy and strategy in the globalized era. Joseph Nye, Political Strategist and Dean at Harvard's Kennedy School of Government, blames the United States' declining world opinion on its neglect of soft power and over-reliance on unilateralism and employment of hard power (Figure 2)

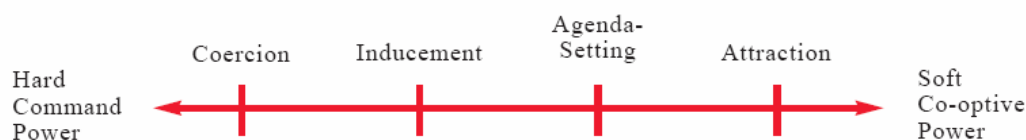


Figure 2. Joseph Nye: Hard vs. Soft Power

In terms of attaining national strategic objectives, soft power must first be considered, and when it has been exhausted, hard power must be retained as an alternative method of influence. USSOCOM enacts soft power through its partnership programs with foreign militaries and governments by conducting training and medical

¹¹ Joseph Nye, *Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics*, (New York: PublicAffairs, 2004). The concept of hard and soft power was first authored by Harvard's Professor Nye in the late 1980s.

and dental civic-action projects (MEDCAP/DENTCAP). This concept of special operations forces relying on other-than-kinetic options to enact US national strategy will be expanded upon in a future chapter.

Globalization can be blamed for everything both good and bad about today's economic and political climates. The fact that companies can export work around the world not only reduces prices and increases profits, but it also exposes products to the rest of the planet. Similarly, from a political and military lens, global communications and logistics allow nations to share ideas and aid, but they too cause tension where some do not want cultural change or western influence, to be honest.

The former world order only permitted large actors to even consider waging war against another large actor, whereas today the idea of a traditional state vs. state conflict is quickly becoming a worry of the past. "Great power war has been taken off the table, and we have become so proficient in state level conflict that the locus of violence has shifted to the level of the individual actor."¹² Today the threat is ambiguous, unconventional, and irregular in nature. It no longer can be neatly identified by national boundaries or ethnic origins. It operates along the seams and in the gaps of civilization. Net-centric guru Arthur Cebrowski states, "We need the ability to look, to understand, and to operate deeply within the fault lines of societies where, increasingly, we find the frontiers of national security. Is it any wonder that there is a sharply increased focus on Special Operations Forces?"¹³ These societies are characterized by theorist Thomas Barnett, focusing on those states and regions where approximately 1/3 of the world

¹² Arthur Cebrowski, "Transforming Transformation," *Transformation Trends*, 19 April 2004, 4 (accessed at http://www.oft.osd.mil/library/library_files/trends_367_Transformation%20Trends-19%20April%20202004%20Issue.pdf on 18 November 2006).

¹³ Ibid.

remains outside the peaceful sphere of the global economy: the *Non-Integrated Gap*.

These regions are those which the United States spends a disproportionate amount of focus and energy attempting to solve destabilization issues. The list includes: Africa, portions of the Balkans, the Caucasus, Central Asia, the Middle East and most of Southeast Asia to name a few.¹⁴ Not surprisingly, these are the regions most populated by US forces conducting flexible deterrent and theater shaping operations. While these states and regions currently pose no overt threat to the security of the United States, their inability to exist in cooperation with those states that Barnett calls the *Functioning Core*, further leaves the door open for violations of human rights, terrorist training, and other nefarious activities. This alludes to the asymmetrical problems with which a hegemonic country such as the United States must address.

At the present time, the most significant threat facing the United States does not follow the Cold War model. Admittedly, China is a growing nation in many regards. Indeed, it might be argued they are already an economic superpower, but militarily they have yet to attain their goal. The “Axis of Evil”¹⁵ states similarly cannot compete with the United States on a force on force scenario, however many of these “bad actors” will look to asymmetric methods to enact their strategies – history, as it always does, will be sure to repeat itself.

Asymmetric warfare is merely a new term for an old method of waging war, but it carries merit as the most probable course of action in the near term future. It is defined as

¹⁴ Barnett, p. xviii.

¹⁵ “Axis of Evil” - Iran, Iraq, and North Korea as identified in President Bush’s address to a joint session of Congress after the 9/11 attacks in 2001.

“conflict between states of vastly different skills, resources and capabilities.”¹⁶ As referenced earlier, the Tofflers refer to the current era of warfare as the Third Wave¹⁷, where the dominance of information could possibly cripple an actor before conventional combat could ever be commenced. This imbalance changes the nature with which traditional actors wage war. T.E. Lawrence experienced such an imbalance when he led the insurgency in Arabia in the early part of the 20th century. He achieved more with less. With regard to the modern environment shaped by terrorism in the 21st century, “the combination of asymmetry and the terrorists’ ability to continually devise idiosyncratic approaches presents our real challenge. Assessing the distinction and interrelationship between these two factors provides us with the initial understanding required to address the operational challenges.”¹⁸ The United States spent the better part of the twentieth century trying to shape the environment to promote democracy and allow for an open and free market economy, only to have those very traits exploited in the 9/11 attacks. “Given our societal dependence on interconnected, technologically intensive systems, al Qaeda used asymmetric means to cleverly develop idiosyncratic attacks on its targets, thus changing our operational and strategic environment.”¹⁹ This environment lends itself to a force able to adapt quickly to emerging technologies and embrace networked systems for their interconnectedness.

Special Operations Forces are uniquely suited to deal with the ambiguous nature and unconventional methods in identifying and combating this type of asymmetric

¹⁶ Gregory R. Copley, “Dreams of an Asymmetrical Victory,” *Defense and Foreign Affairs Strategic Policy*, 30, no. 2 (Feb 2002), 2.

¹⁷ First Wave was Agricultural-based, Second Wave was rooted in the industrial revolution and resulted in mass formations and arsenals.

¹⁸ Montgomery C. Meigs, GEN (ret), USA, “Unorthodox Thoughts about Asymmetric Warfare,” *Parameters*, 33, no. 2 (Summer 2003), 4.

¹⁹ *Ibid*, 5.

warfare. Whereas a submarine is the best weapon system to detect, deter, and defeat an enemy submarine, so too can a parallel be drawn for asymmetric warfare. “Although American strategic culture is uncomfortable with the idea of employing the same asymmetric warfare strategies that our adversaries might adopt, asymmetric warfare can be practiced by the strong as well as by the weak.”²⁰ To deal with asymmetric threats, one must be able to understand and assess the threat, make a decision, and act faster than the enemy. Colonel John Boyd, USAF (retired) captured this concept in his famed OODA Loop, where the principle was to complete the Observe-Orient-Decide-Act loop faster than the enemy to achieve victory. Whereas this concept was specifically designed for air to air combat among fighters, it has become universally accepted as a model which can be applied to virtually any competitive environment such as business, sports, and various military situations.

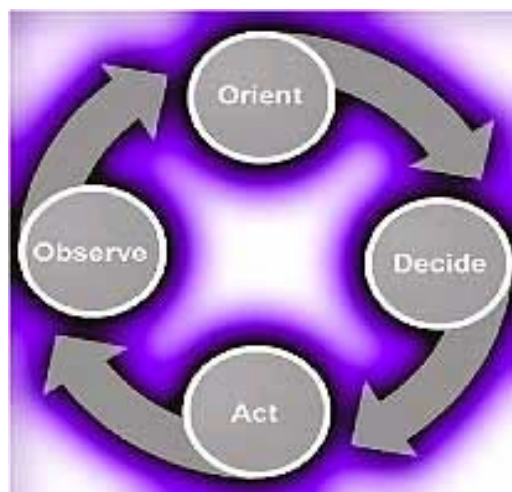


Figure 3. Boyd's OODA Loop²¹

²⁰ Keith Dickson, “The New Asymmetry: Unconventional Warfare and the Army Special Forces,” *Special Warfare*, 14, no. 4 (Fall, 2001), 16.

²¹ Accessed on the internet on 28 February 2007 at <http://www.nwlink.com/~donclark/leadership/ooda.html>

Take for example the Operation Iraqi Freedom information operations campaign. When something catastrophic occurs, the first to act (seize the initiative) and generate a public product or statement typically gains the upper hand, leaving the slower competitor on their heels, attempting to conduct damage control. Often in recent times, the United States took too long to get the perfect solution when a 75% answer might have sufficed. During the ill-fated Abu Ghraib prison scandal, a single actor (potentially more) was able to manipulate and publish the pictures via the internet, exploit them, and virtually cripple the U.S. Defense Department's – specifically Secretary Rumsfeld's – image and efforts to project OIF as a legitimate war, creating a moral victory for the insurgency in Iraq and beyond. The effects of the scandal invigorated U.S. politicians and several retired military leaders to call for the SECDEF's dismissal. All because of the actions of several junior soldiers and a well run enemy Information Operations (IO) campaign that got inside the decision cycle (loop) of the United States' administration. Similar to the North Vietnamese general who admitted that U.S. forces never lost a battle: "That is correct, but it is also irrelevant," nobody debates that the U.S. continued to win battles and engagements at the tactical and operational levels, however it suffered a devastating strategic setback as it tried to convince its population and that of the rest of the world that the war in Iraq was justified and necessary on a greater level in the GWOT.

Asymmetric warfare typifies Boyd's OODA loop process in terms of tactics as well. Consider the improvised explosive device (IED) dilemma facing coalition troops. During the early portions of the Iraq War, IEDs were crude devices. As coalition troops developed means to counter the triggering mechanisms, the insurgents changed their tactics in developing more advanced methods. For example, in late 2003, Iraq didn't

even have a cell phone network. By the end of 2004, they were using the newly established cell phone technology to detonate bombs, forcing coalition troops to research, develop, test, and employ electronic jamming devices to counter.

Cell phones are an ideal example of the duality of globalization and its effects on the environment. They were built to enhance communications, mobilize information sharing, and create a broader means of conducting personal or professional business. They are the perfect tool to allow the commoner to gain, understand, and act on information far beyond that of information-starved generations past. How could that be anything but a monumental international achievement? Unfortunately, today cell phones have become a nuisance in public places, a single point of failure for many business travelers, and even a means to trigger a bomb. General Zinni's quote at the beginning of the chapter typifies the nexus between advancements brought on by the effects of globalization and the harsh failures for cultures to adapt. The issue remains not in the technology enhanced by globalization, but the intentions and acts of the players involved and how globalization helped to achieve their ends.

Today's international environment is complex, fluid, and requires a strategy of interdependent relationships throughout the elements of national power. Anyone choosing the independent route will quickly realize the necessity for the comprehensive alternative. Unilateralism, in any context, often results in a lack of true environmental awareness, from which loners rarely recover gracefully. Those who embrace the nature of the environment and integrate accordingly, succeed much more often. Having discussed the environment, the factors which shape it, and the impact of globalization, this study will next cover the nature of the threat that exists in this global context.

3. A DIFFERENT WORLD; A DIFFERENT THREAT

*The enemy we are facing now is vastly different than the enemy we have faced in the past. The American people need a reminder that we are indeed a nation at war and that they have an important role to play.*²²

Having set the foundation and addressed the nature of the modern environment – a medium in which small actors can impart their views and actions in big ways – the study will next consider the evolution of the current threat, and pose that while differences and similarities exist in specifics from historical foes of the past, it also can be viewed as a monumental fight for this generation.

Who is the Enemy in the 21st Century?

Not unlike generations past, the world at the end of the Cold War indeed looked both familiar and unique. As in 1945, the United States again found itself peerless militarily. It is often quoted that history does not repeat itself in detail, but it certainly does so in general terms. How did the United States, and the rest of the world for that matter, *not* see Germany building its power in the 1930s and 1940s? If they weren't overtly building an illegal and formidable military establishment, what could possibly have been misconstrued? Fast forward to the period following the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1990: the symbolic end to the Cold War. How many terrorist attacks on the United States, its sovereign embassies, and Navy ships needed to occur before the writing on the wall was clear to see? How many incidents could be considered coincidental before the nation realized it was the target of a single movement?

²² Congresswoman Thelma Drake, (R-VA, 2nd District) speech at Joint Forces Staff College, 14 August 2006.

Whereas the enemy following the attack on Pearl Harbor in 1941 was all too obvious, the strategists of the present administration struggle to identify exactly against whom the United States is waging this global “war on terrorism.” Similarly, the ambiguity with which they attempt to describe the enemy leads to an uninformed population. If one cannot point to the enemy and say, “That’s it,” then who is it? “I’ll know it when I see it” doesn’t hold water when American borders have been breached and thousands are dead.

Undeniably in 2000, the United States faced limited threats from national actors. As the only remaining superpower, it enjoyed a seemingly peaceful outlook with respect to state competitors for the foreseeable near future. Certainly, many nations had issues which threatened regional stability such as North Korea, Syria, Yemen, Iraq and Iran. More so, other nations had internal issues such as Colombia, Afghanistan, Kenya and Sudan. And China’s desire to be a world superpower was known but not forecast to threaten anyone for at least a decade. Admittedly, terrorism had been a rogue tactic for factions, sects, political, and ideological movements since the early 1970s, but it had always seemingly occurred “over there.” Military and political planners had counterterrorism policies on the shelf, but few American citizens predicted an attack on the homeland in the relatively stable era of the new millennium.

Terrorism, in hindsight, seemed to be the *only* legitimate potential threat, or rather method for attacking the homeland. How did the United States miss it? In fact, there were many signs and indicators of impending disaster that many overlooked or justified away. After 9/11, it didn’t matter. The enemy quickly made clear that the United States not only had a bulls-eye on it, but they struck dead center. The ensuing dilemma resulted

in that the United States could not look back at the origin of the terrorists and attack their nations because they were from (that is – born, trained, originated, claimed) places/nations allied with the U.S. in many cases. Whom to hold accountable?

What they had in common was the fact that they were radical Muslim men who worked for a terrorist cell called al Qaeda, which had established Afghanistan as its training base. In fairness, the President, supporting the fundamentals of the U.S. Constitution, had to protect the Islamic religion and support it as a fundamentally peace-loving theology. To be honest however, what the enemy looked like on 9/11, and what he remains today from a western perspective, was largely a fundamental – extreme or radical from a western view – angry, Muslim sect: Islamists who choose to employ terrorist tactics to achieve political and ideological end states. As delineated in the National Military Strategic Plan (War on Terrorism):

The enemy is a transnational movement of extremist organizations, networks, and individuals -- and their state and non-state supporters -- which have in common that they exploit Islam and use terrorism for ideological ends. The al Qaeda Associated Movement (AQAM), comprised of al Qaeda and affiliated extremists, is the most dangerous present manifestation of such extremism. Certain other violent extremist groups also pose a serious and continuing threat.²³

Little doubt can be cast that the previous statement from the 2006 NMSP-WOT is a decent attempt to define the enemy. This is an issue with which many planners throughout the Combatant Commands and Joint Staff struggle.

²³ Department of Defense, *National Military Strategic Plan for the War on Terrorism* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1 Feb 2006), 4.

Waging a war on terrorism sends a confusing message.²⁴ Terrorism is a tactic, a method, a means to wage war. In fact, terrorism is ugly, it's heinous, but it isn't with who the U.S. is at war. Waging a war on terrorism is a politically correct way to sell a war, but it doesn't identify to the American public who the enemy is. It only addresses the "how."

America needs to know that their military and the numerous other agencies within the government are fighting a war against a people who originate from Islamic sects and wish to use their religion as a method for imparting their ideology on the rest of the world, forcibly if necessary. Various strategic documents attempting to name the enemy debate whether or not to include any form of the term "Islam" for fear of further alienating the moderates. It is expected that further national strategic documents will most likely remove the term "Islam" to reduce resentment of the United States, when in fact, it remains a common thread of terrorists originating in the crescent of instability.²⁵ Regardless, the threat requires constant review and assessment; staying inside the enemy decision/information loop is key.

The dynamic and global nature of the terrorist threat requires continuous reassessment and evaluation to stay ahead of the enemy. Most importantly, we must understand how these organizations emerge, operate, and sustain themselves.²⁶

This study will make no attempt to solve this debate, only to address the obvious fact that the enemy, by and large, are all Muslims, mostly men, mostly uneducated (but

²⁴ While the term "war on terrorism" is debated here in this study, it will continue to be used throughout the monograph when referring to the current global fight to prevent confusion and provide consistency with other documents.

²⁵ The crescent is referred to in several different sources by different terms, but ultimately includes most of the Muslim-oriented regions of the eastern hemisphere to include Turkey, Egypt, portions of east Africa, the Arabian Peninsula, the Middle Eastern States, South-Central Asia and many of the islands in the Southwest Pacific.

²⁶ Dell L. Dailey, LTG, USA and Jeffrey G. Webb, LtCol, USMC, "US Special Operations Command and the War on Terror," *Joint Forces Quarterly*, 40, no. 1 (2006): 46.

certainly not in all cases), and mostly seeking to promote a radical ideology vice a peaceable coexistence as is the case with most western societies.

Their objectives are clear:

1. Expel America from the Middle East and Establish Islamic Authority
2. Extend the Jihad Wave to Neighboring Countries
3. Destroy Israel
4. Restore the Historical Caliphate²⁷ (Figure 4)



Figure 4. Map of Objective Caliphate

To counter these objectives, the U.S. set out to exert its might to avenge the 9/11 attacks and attempt to establish peace and democracy in the Middle East. While the reaction to attacks on the homeland were initially dealt with using the military arm of its national power, admittedly the Bush administration understood that to address the threat on a comprehensive and international scale, it would require diplomacy, information campaigns, economic sanctions, financial forensics, accurate and timely intelligence and integrated law enforcement both within and external to U.S. national borders.

²⁷ Objective map of the United States of Islam as predicted by the Muttahida Jihad Council in May 2001. Slide take from Joint Staff Long War Brief given to the Eisenhower Series on 1 March 2006. Accessed on the internet on 10 September 2006 at www.eisenhowerseries.com/pdfs/terrorism_06/presentations/Long%20War%20Brief%20060301.pdf

Immediately following the 9/11 attacks, numerous countries called President Bush to offer their assistance and condolences. He gladly accepted many offers and boldly stated in his address to the nation – and the rest of the world – “you are either with us or you are against us in the fight against terror.”²⁸ In hind sight, his tough-talk diplomacy was admittedly inappropriate, though one could hardly criticize at the time. His administration did a complementary job of organizing a coalition of the willing to address the threat and defeat it. Unfortunately, he did not enjoy such diplomatic success in attacking Iraq and has been harshly criticized for leading not only the U.S., but many other dutifully bound partner nations into Iraq. Did Iraq pose the same threat as the al Qaeda sponsored terrorists? What commonalities exist?

Asymmetric Challenges Require a Multifaceted Approach

Going after any enemy requires a holistic sense of addressing critical links and nodes, and to defeat such a foe necessitates identifying its critical vulnerabilities to topple the house of cards. For today’s complex threat, a game plan incorporating all of the elements of DIME is clearly necessary to win.

The adversary that presents itself against the western ideals, and specifically the United States, may be many things, but in the context of today’s environment, it is essentially an asymmetric threat. Their only means to take on the west is through asymmetric warfare – avoiding a direct confrontation. The peer competitor state threat may develop in time, but largely in the current era, the United States will likely not be challenged by a similar force or tactic.

²⁸ Comments made by President Bush at a press conference while hosting French President Chirac at the White House on 6 Nov 2001 prior to echoing the sentiment before the United Nations later that week.

Militarily, the U.S. possessed many methods for employing overwhelming force: the Navy Carrier Battle Group, numbered Air Forces, and huge Marine Air-Ground Task Forces and Army Corps, but the threat does not measure up to the tools, thereby necessitating new (old) methods for dealing with it.

The U.S. Marine Corps tackled this asymmetric phenomenon in 1940, creating a manual for what they termed, *Small Wars*. Today, its relevance could not be more apropos.

The manual cites:

Small wars vary in degrees from simple demonstrative operations to military intervention in the fullest sense, short of war. They are not limited in their size, in the extent of their theater of operations, nor their cost in property, money, or lives. The essence of a small war is its purpose and the circumstances surrounding its inception and conduct, the character of either one or all of the opposing forces, and the nature of the operations themselves.²⁹

It provides roots to the current phasing construct which has been revised to not only emphasize the shaping phase early on and the enabling of civil authorities at the end of hostilities, but it reduces the focus on major combat operations, upon which the military has always been myopically focused. Again, the Marine perspective from 1940:

- Phase 1. Initial demonstration or landing and action of vanguard.
- Phase 2. The arrival of reinforcements and general military operations in the field.
- Phase 3. Assumption of control of executive agencies, and cooperation with the legislative and judicial agencies.
- Phase 4. Routine police functions.
- Phase 5. Withdrawal from the Theater of Operations.³⁰

This phasing construct shows how small wars, or asymmetric ones, acknowledge the need for the use of force during the appropriate times, but also takes consideration for

²⁹ Headquarters, Department of the Navy, *NAVMC 2890, Small Wars Manual*, (Washington D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1940) 1.

³⁰ *Ibid*, 5.

controlling the governmental systems and restoring local order (police functions) similar to counterinsurgency doctrine.

At the strategic level, other nations may wage cyber (informational) attacks or economic subversion, but militarily the United States must focus its near-term attention against enemies who will attack using non-traditional means. To military historians, this should ring of unconventional warfare and insurgent tactics. This is the only way a modern adversary can take on the hegemonic military of the United States.

Acknowledged in the joint counterinsurgency manual, the enemy must – and will – fight dirty: “The contest of internal war is not ‘fair’; many of the ‘rules’ favor insurgents. That is why insurgency has been a common approach used by the weak against the strong.”³¹

Recognizing the training void, the Multi-National Force in Iraq (MNF-I) recently stood up a Counter-Insurgency (COIN) school to teach both U.S. Army and Marine leaders the fundamentals of understanding and defeating an insurgency. Similarly, the U.S. Army established a special mission unit, the Asymmetric Warfare Group, to specifically address this modern, albeit classic threat. And both services just recently published the new jointly-authored COIN manual, Army Field Manual 3-24 and Marine Corps Warfighting Publication 3-33.5, *Counterinsurgency Operations*, where although both services acknowledge the military mission, they also recognize the need for a more comprehensive interagency approach which includes international government organizations, non-government organizations, and contributions from throughout the bureaucracy of the government. Asymmetric warfare, presently manifested as a global insurgency, is an addictive problem set requiring everyone to come together.

³¹ Headquarters, Department of the Army, *FM 3-24, Counterinsurgency*, (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 2006) 1-2.

Ironically, many Vietnam-era Soldiers and Marines liken the current gravitation toward COIN to a kids' soccer game in which everyone on the field congregates around the ball. In the mid to late 1970s, one couldn't shake a tree without COIN doctrine falling from every branch, but the height of the Cold War shifted the focus away to force on force a la AirLand Battle doctrine forcing the services to relearn what was once a core military task.

As the manual dictates, dealing with this historically repetitive, but modernly unique environment clearly requires more than just a military method of engagement. It necessitates an understanding of information and, to a greater degree, a keen awareness of how to use and exploit such information toward an intended consequence. The U.S. military, as part of a greater government effort, has been attempting to master this task for years. The U.S. Strategic Command's (USSTRATCOM) Joint Information Operations Warfare Command mission: "plans, integrates, and synchronizes information operations in direct support of Joint Force Commanders' and serves as the USSTRATCOM lead for enhancing information operations across the Department of Defense."³² At the strategic/political level, in 2005 President Bush nominated Karen Hughes as Under Secretary for Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs with the rank of Ambassador, a move to show his commitment toward developing an effective Strategic Communications campaign to not only project U.S. diplomacy, but to understand the international environment as well. In her confirmation hearing testimony, Ambassador Hughes stated:

There is no more important challenge for our future than the urgent need to foster greater understanding, more respect and a sense of common interests and common ideals among Americans and people of different

³² Accessed on the internet on 19 February 2007 at http://www.stratcom.mil/fact_sheets/fact_jioc.html.

countries, cultures and faiths throughout the world. The mission of public diplomacy is to engage, inform, and help others understand our policies, actions and values – but I am mindful that before we seek to be understood, we must first work to understand.³³

In the current context of U.S. worldwide engagement, much of which is viewed unfavorably, Ambassador Hughes shoulders tremendous responsibility. Capitalizing on the strategic communications message and projecting U.S. actions as just and for the greater good of the world are vital to U.S. legitimacy, particularly in an international environment which is largely skeptical of U.S. policies. While optimistic, her testimony was realistic about the battle of ideas:

Perceptions do not change quickly or easily. We are involved in a generational and global struggle of ideas – a struggle that pits the power of hate against the power of hope. As Prime Minister Tony Blair said after the horror of the London bombings, "This is a battle that must be won, a battle not just about the terrorist methods but their views. Not just their barbaric acts, but their barbaric ideas."³⁴

Not only is the United States attempting to engage and defeat the enemy from an informational perspective, but it is also using the arms of the economic and financial power of the country in its multi-pronged holistic approach to ultimately seeking peace.

Following the events of September 11, 2001, President Bush issued Executive Order 13224, significantly expanding the scope of U.S. sanctions against international terrorists and terrorist organizations. The combination of innovative programs targeting international terrorist organizations with those targeting terrorist-supporting governments represents a wide-ranging assault on international terrorism, its supporters and financiers.³⁵

³³ Karen Hughes, testimony at confirmation hearing before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, Washington, DC July 22, 2005. Accessed on the internet on 19 February 2007 at <http://www.state.gov/r/us/2005/49967.htm>

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ U.S. Department of Treasury, "Terrorist Assets Report," 2002. Accessed on the internet on 19 February 2007 at <http://www.ustreas.gov/offices/enforcement/ofac/reports/tar2002.pdf>

Where money is often thought to be the root of all evil, the United States Government developed an in-depth strategy to sanction countries and freeze assets of private and public companies financing illicit programs in the U.S. The Department of Treasury's Office of Terrorism and Financial Intelligence marshals the department's intelligence and enforcement functions with the twin aims of safeguarding the financial system against illicit use and combating rogue nations, terrorist facilitators, money launderers, drug kingpins, and other national security threats.³⁶

Intelligence is said to drive operations. Undoubtedly, it is the source of all resulting actions of the other elements of national power. It is the common thread from which all elements take information and process it into action. In the era of asymmetric threats, intelligence dominance is essential to identifying, tracking, and targeting the enemy. Its importance can be seen in the progression of warfare and the numerous theories which have been updated to the generation of intelligence operations (i.e. Third Wave, Fourth Generation, Net-Centricity, etc). It is in this globalized environment where information dominates, where those who can act faster and with more accuracy will achieve the intended results and win. The recent restructuring of the robust (and often parochial) U.S. intelligence community under one director is an example of the recognized importance of capitalizing on this significant undertaking.

Whether using the PMESII (Political, Military, Economic, Social, Infrastructure, and Intelligence) or DIMEFIL (Diplomacy, Information, Military, Economic, Financial, Intelligence, and Law Enforcement) models for addressing a situation with strategic implications, little debate exists that the approach toward a solution should be – must be –

³⁶ U.S. Department of Treasury, Office of Terrorism and Financial Intelligence Mission Statement, accessed on the internet on 21 February 2007 at <http://www.ustreas.gov/offices/enforcement/>

broad. It must be broad in scope, but specific in lines of authority, mission taskings, supported/supporting relationships, resourcing, phasing, objectives, etc. In short, a U.S. Government vice a Department of Defense campaign plan is needed, plus a comprehensive U.S. Government strategic plan to defend the U.S. against *all* threats, not just those faced today. However, the point of the study will focus on how within the total government approach, the Department of Defense has a unique weapon in SOF. This study contends that Special Operations Forces offer another incremental method, one that allows plausible deniability or a less overt signature, one that is uniquely suited to small/asymmetric threats, and one that is well integrated throughout the United States Government prior to committing the totality of the U.S. military establishment.

The next chapter will take a brief look at the cause and origin of special operations forces and how they have evolved into a relevant force in the context of today's operational environment.

4. SPECIAL OPERATIONS: THE TOOLBOX “MULTI-TOOL”

*"It is not the critic who counts: not the man who points out how the strong man stumbles or where the doer of deeds could have done better. The credit belongs to the man who is actually in the arena, whose face is marred by dust and sweat and blood, who strives valiantly, who errs and comes up short again and again, because there is no effort without error or shortcoming, but who knows the great enthusiasms, the great devotions, who spends himself for a worthy cause; who, at the best, knows, in the end, the triumph of high achievement, and who, at the worst, if he fails, at least he fails while daring greatly, so that his place shall never be with those cold and timid souls who knew neither victory nor defeat."*³⁷

-- Theodore Roosevelt

Before discussing the genesis of present day special operations, consider the similar perspectives in recent history. In the aftermath of World War I, the world gained a new appreciation for the threats posed by various European nations. From that era's perspective, they had just survived the Great War, the last of the 2nd Generation Wars (qualitatively improved weapons and massed firepower) according to Thomas Hammes.³⁸ The assumption was that things would change and such a war would be never again. Technology during the latter years of the war brought about advances in tanks, airplanes, and mobile artillery causing thinkers to acknowledge the complexities of the modern warfare and assume that these new capabilities would deter further aggression, or if employed, overwhelmingly defeat the enemy. This post-industrialized archetype would fail.

Less than a generation later Europe and the Pacific were again amid major aggression, this time conducting true maneuver warfare in accordance with Hammes' 3rd Generation Warfare doctrine (motorized/airborne infantry, radio communications, close

³⁷ "Citizen in a Republic" speech at the Sorbonne, Paris, April 23, 1910

³⁸ Thomas Hammes, *The Sling and the Stone* (St. Paul, Zenith Press: 2004), p. 18-22.

air support, three dimensional battlefields).³⁹ Rather than deter aggression, the tools of the 20th century were employed on a scale never before witnessed. Not unlike the period following the First World War however, similar technologies were swiftly developed during and after the Second World War. In fact, the United States thought the possession of strategic bombers and intercontinental ballistic missiles would provide international dominance and stability through strategic nuclear deterrence. Even though the US was unmatched through 1950 militarily, its nuclear arsenal was not, in and of itself, enough deterrent to prevent North Korea's invasion of the South, China's Maoist insurgency resulting in the isolation of Formosa (and Chang Kai-shek), and the Soviet Union's expansion of communism throughout Eastern Europe.

The Cold War proved a classic example within the U.S. government of posturing by various administrations to expand the defense establishment or cut defense spending, depending on the reigning party and the threats perceived. Whereas World War II saw an unprecedented U.S. national mobilization, the period immediately following was one of the greatest "hollowings" of the military force as it drew back and cut spending, leaving only a skeletal framework to deter the growing Soviet threat.

After Vietnam, the military establishment once again made a surge to professionalize the force and replace the major equipment with modern systems, but this was all focused on one thing:⁴⁰ the Soviets breaching the Fulda Gap in Europe and conducting a classic war of attrition, tanks vs. tank, aircraft vs. aircraft, and division vs.

³⁹ Ibid, 13.

⁴⁰ The military is often criticized for preparing to win the last, most recent wars thus being one step behind the current fight (i.e. Trying to win in Iraq using the first Gulf War as the model). On balance, SECDEF Rumsfeld did attempt to lean the packages and forced CENTCOM to rework their OPLAN 1003 to reflect his version of the smaller, newer, net-centric force. He did, however, face criticism from traditionalists who argued for a larger requirement on the ground.

division. Desert Storm was a quick, resounding AirLand Battle “victory” for the United States and coalition forces further inculcating amongst US defense analysts and leadership that the paradigm was right and 3GW was the mantra forevermore.

In each historical case, the American military establishment thought it faced a unique world situation – one seemingly more threatening and complex than any previous; and it manufactured a technology or weapon to deal with the emerging threats and a new kind of warfare. Hammes argues that we face yet another kind of warfare in the post Cold War era. In fact, it is *not* new. To be sure, today we face newer technologies and networks and systems, however, the new type of warfare we face is only a new name for an old threat. Call it asymmetric warfare, insurgency, or 4th Generation Warfare if you are “slinging the stone.” It is warfare waged not on a linear battlefield with force on force formations, but a fight in local townships, on household televisions, and in citizens’ hearts and minds. This is a type of warfare for which the American industrial complex cannot mobilize, nor can the checkbook of the U.S. government overwhelm. The Air Force’s F-22 cannot dominate, the Navy’s DDX is not specifically relevant, and the Army’s Comanche and Crusader weapons systems failed to attract enough support to gain momentum, thus they were cancelled. The modern fight today is an engagement battle requiring human interface. T.E. Lawrence and Sun Tzu would remind us that despite modernity, these are lessons we should have gleaned from wars past.

That said, the only weapons system that can address *today’s* variety of challenges is adaptive, disciplined Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen, and Marines. Since a Joint approach is inevitably necessary, no single military organization is more uniquely suited for this than the men and women of US Special Operations Command. Since Vietnam, Special Forces

have excelled at unconventional warfare. Today's SOF are more formally trained and equipped to address these challenges than ever. From Air Force Pararescuemen to Navy SEALs to the Civil Affairs (CA) and Psychological Operations (PSYOPS) Soldiers of the Army, USSOCOM is laden with non-traditional tools to deal with the entire breadth of the conflict continuum. The current QDR acknowledges the need to shift from combating *traditional* threats of the past toward more *irregular, catastrophic* and *disruptive* threats (Figure 5). But, this is primarily the method with which SOF has operated in their niche mission set for the last several decades. Special Forces teams have been Shaping Choices for years while conducting Foreign Internal Defense (FID) missions with partner nations. Special mission units have similarly been training and conducting Counterterrorism and WMD Counter Proliferation missions outside of the public eye for years. The fact that conventional forces currently lack the skill sets to address these emerging needs was addressed in the QDR, which stated, "Joint ground forces will continue to take on more of the tasks performed by today's special operations forces. Future warriors will be as proficient in irregular operations, including counterinsurgency and stabilization operations, as they are in high-intensity combat."⁴¹

⁴¹ 2006 QDR, 42.

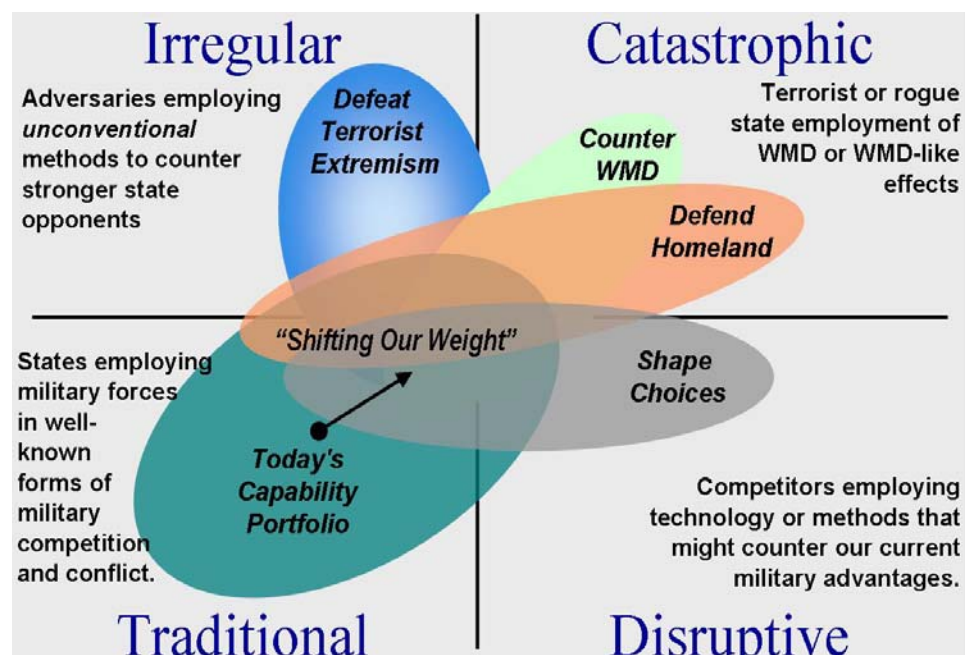


Figure 5. DoD "Quad Chart"

To demonstrate SOF's current mission focus, the nine core tasks are as follows:

<i>Unconventional Warfare</i>	<i>Foreign Internal Defense</i>	<i>Civil Affairs</i>
<i>Direct Action</i>	<i>PsyOps & Information Ops</i>	<i>Counterterrorism</i>
<i>Special Reconnaissance</i>	<i>WMD Counterproliferation</i>	<i>GWOT</i>

These core tasks indicate the suitability of SOF to this current type of asymmetric fight, as most of the tasks lie in the irregular, disruptive and catastrophic realms. The downside is that these forces have been heavily relied upon to conduct the fight while bringing others up to speed on moving toward the capabilities portfolio of the future, as outline in the QDR. Not unlike the rest of the Department of Defense, SOF too has been exhausted by demands and deployments.

The scale of today's global war has stretched USSOCOM far too thin, necessitating internal growth and indispensable augmentation from the conventional

force. But integrating SOF and conventional forces has not always been a seamless arrangement.

The utility of SOF both in and out of conflict was validated in the 2006 QDR, where USSOCOM is directed to grow by 15 percent and increase most of its tactical units by one third.⁴² This process will undoubtedly take years to mature. The short term solution – which must become a long term solution even more so – of augmenting and integrating conventional forces with special operations forces must occur, and must be incorporated into doctrine vice huddling up in the field and calling audibles, which invariably end up leading to miscues, tension, and possible losses.

Understanding the dilemma brought on by the disruptive means, the irregular methods and the catastrophic nature of the threat in the global fight, the National Command Authority turned to USSOCOM to prosecute the fight. Is this just a twenty-first century weapon system to deal with the generational method of warfare or is it a force that has been garaged but available all along? Charged with the overall responsibility for planning, synchronizing and prosecuting the GWOT (and all of the interagency therein), what must the special operations command do to give the United States a convincing chance at victory?

Special operations forces are not a technological windfall. While they undoubtedly offer some dynamic options for combating challenges to U.S. security and interests, they too have limitations. They take advantage of, and employ, emerging capabilities, but the core of SOF is its people – people who think, act, and change with the environment and situation. They are by and large Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen and Marines who are selected from the very best and most experienced of the conventional

⁴² 2006 QDR, 5.

force, and trained to an exacting standard for specific tasks. When deployed, they form a highly effective, jointly focused, integrated system of people and capabilities. This is one of the most complex combat systems ever fielded by our Nation's military, but its roots paint a picture of a challenging path.

The Department of Defense Reorganization Act of 1986 is regarded by many in both military and political circles as the most necessary and significant restructuring of the United States military since the National Security Act of 1947. Its emphasis on promoting "jointness" throughout the military services can be traced to the 1980 failed rescue attempt of the American hostages in Iran. During this ill-fated, but renowned operation ("Eagle Claw"), US forces incurred several debacles related to poor equipment, incorrect intelligence, lack of joint training, Washington DC micromanagement, and arguably a lack of focus on parts of the ad hoc team, supporting units and other government agencies which were assembled uniquely for this mission. The numerous lessons and observations from the failure in the sands of the Iranian desert demonstrated to many influential decision-makers that the United States military was lacking. This also pointed to a failure among the services and military communities to train, integrate, and operate together, as evidenced again only three years later in 1983 during Operation Urgent Fury in Grenada. While the mission to rescue American students from the island was considered successful, it "was characterized by a muddled chain of command and squabbling among the branches. The dark humor among the participants was that the island simply was not big enough for all the US services."⁴³

Several key military and political figures set out to right the wrong and restore confidence (specifically jointness) not only to the military, but to the American people as

⁴³ James A. Kitfield, "A Better Way to Run a War," *Air Force Magazine* (Oct, 2006), 36.

well – that the world’s most powerful nation needed a force equally trained and ready for whatever the Nation required. Senators Goldwater and Nichols and later Nunn and Cohen authored laws and addendums which would prevent such military failures as Eagle Claw. Whereas Goldwater-Nichols focused on the jointness of the military, the Nunn-Cohen Amendment “called for a joint military organization for SOF and the establishment of an office in the Department of Defense to ensure adequate funding and policy emphasis for low-intensity conflict and special operations.”⁴⁴ This ultimately established a separate four-star command for Special Operations with the intent of bypassing the joint chiefs and reporting directly to the Secretary of Defense. The Commander in Chief (then-titled) of USSOCOM held service-like, Title 10 authorities to organize, train, and equip his force. It also established a separate service-like pocket book, Major Force Program 11, in addition to creating the position of assistant secretary of defense for special operations and low intensity conflict. This further promoted jointness – specifically within the command – as well as allowed the leadership to quickly adapt to unique operational requirements while the services retained oversight on procurement of service-specific items.

Whereas Eagle Claw and Urgent Fury were catalysts to identify and fix the problem and provide the nation with a world-class national force, and whereas Goldwater-Nichols and Nunn-Cohen provided SOF with the authorities and funding to execute their mission at the strategic level, SOF would continue to face an territorial fight at home to overcome stereotypes, risk aversion, and service parochial decision-making at the joint chiefs level regarding employment. “These showstoppers formed an

⁴⁴ USSOCOM History, accessed on the internet on 5 December 2006 at http://www.specialoperations.com/History/SOCOM_History/Default.htm

impenetrable phalanx ensuring that all high level policy discussions, tough new presidential directives, revised contingency plans, and actual dress rehearsals for missions would come to nothing.”⁴⁵

Admittedly, SOF is often tasked with missions that have enormous risk and high potential failure rates, but they have a remarkable record of success as well. As stated by GEN Peter Schoomaker, currently the Army Chief of Staff, but formerly commander of USSOCOM, “It was very, very frustrating. It was like having a brand-new Ferrari in the garage, and nobody wants to race it because you might dent the fender.”⁴⁶ Policy-makers were hesitant to use special operations forces for various reasons to include legal authorities, characterization of terrorism as a crime (as opposed to an act of war), risk aversion by both military leadership and civilian staffs at the national security council, and labeling of the “pariah cowboys.”⁴⁷ In fact, some senior Pentagon officials emphasized, “when we would carry back from the counterterrorism group one of those SOF counterterrorism proposals, our job was to figure out not how to execute it, but how we were going to say no.”⁴⁸ Clearly, there are still hurdles to overcome and issues which must be addressed; however, SOF actions have proven they are up to the task and will continue to do their mission as part of the larger joint and combined fight of this generation.

Today’s SOF continue to face these “cowboy” challenges, however the current war legitimize their employment in certain hot spots. Their performance over the past six years in battle has garnered a reputation of a force able to conduct its mission with an

⁴⁵ Schultz, Richard H., Jr., “Showstoppers,” *The Weekly Standard*, January 26, 2004, 26.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 31.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

unprecedented scale of success. Where they continue to fight the uphill battles lies in the missions which put the U.S. government in a compromising situation, such as crossing the Afghanistan border into Pakistan while chasing Taliban and Al Qaeda fighters.

Where SOF needs to continue to focus its efforts in legitimacy is at the national/interagency level, where they have a tremendous reputation as proficient leaders among very high level officials. The senior leadership within the USSOCOM community possesses the leadership and reputation to use the Global War Campaign Plan to facilitate what will hopefully one day become the integration of the interagency.

No doubt, special operations forces have come a long way from the failed rescue attempt in 1980 to leading the long war today. As it exists presently, SOF is comprised of various units charged with a variety of tasks from logistical support to intelligence collection to civil and psychological operations to direct action operations. In all, SOF consists of only approximately 50,000 servicemen and women; a significant portion of these forces are continually deployed throughout the globe conducting their mission of being at the right place, at the right time, against the right adversary.

Before the 9/11 terrorist attacks on America, USSOCOM's primary focus was on its supporting command mission of organizing, training, and equipping SOF and providing those forces to work for the geographic combatant commanders, U.S. ambassadors and their country teams.⁴⁹

In the aftermath of the attacks, the President charged USSOCOM to lead the military's global fight to find, fix, and finish the threat. Reaffirmed formally in the 2006 Unified Command Plan, CDRUSSOCOM is charged with "serving as the lead combatant commander for planning, synchronizing, and as directed, executing global operations

⁴⁹ USSOCOM Handout, "Introduction to USSOCOM" obtained from PAO, 29 November 2006.

against terrorist networks in coordination with other combatant commanders.”⁵⁰ This uniquely gave a functional combatant commander authority to prioritize the fight, a task historically bestowed upon the regional combatant commanders. Because of the boundary-less nature of the foe, the unconventional tactics employed, and USSOCOM’s ability to synchronize joint, interagency, and multinational efforts, special operations is the command given the burden of finding a solution to this difficult problem set faced in this unique global environment.

Whereas military forces are commonly looked-to for the stereotypical “hammer” missions, US special operations forces are often employed in less traditionally kinetic missions and more commonly charged with conducting shaping operations as part of theater security cooperation plans. Before the current world environment focused on Afghanistan, Iraq and the global hunt for terrorists, SOF operators were heavily engaged in regions such as the islands of the Pacific Rim, the jungles of South and Central America, and eastern European countries to deter destabilization, promote humanitarian rights, fight narco-trafficking, and provide a US presence in conjunction with joint and combined military training exercises.

In one of the most dramatic shifts in U.S. defense policy since the Cold War, the U.S. military has independently initiated and strengthened military-to-military relationships with a majority of the world’s nations. A prime tool in the construction of this new network is the Joint Combined Exchange Training (JCET) program, which allows the Pentagon to deploy Special Operations Forces (SOF) anywhere without congressional oversight or public debate.⁵¹

Indeed, these forces offer the nation a unique method for enacting its political, informational, and (indirectly) its economic objectives through military training and

⁵⁰ President, *Unified Command Plan* (5 May 2006), 11.

⁵¹ John Rudy and Ivan Eland, “Special Operations Military Training Abroad and its Dangers,” *CATO Institute: Foreign Policy Briefing*, no 53, Jun 1999, 1.

cooperation. But in most hostile situations, they cannot unilaterally achieve these same ends. SOF must integrate not only with US conventional and multinational forces, but it must further crack the tough nut of assimilating the interagency community into the tactical, operational and strategic fight. While SOF is a joint force by its very nature, it must become more “Joint.”

5. JOINT...WITH A CAPITAL J⁵²

Recent events have shown that, within the United States government, seams exist in agencies' abilities to cooperate, coordinate and, most importantly, synchronize efforts. The military had similar problems identified in the mid 1980s (precipitated by the events of Eagle Claw referenced earlier) which were addressed by the Goldwater-Nichols Defense Reorganization Act of 1986 promoting joint operations within the Department of Defense. This initiated a transformation of service insularity into a military required to train and fight as a joint force, but it did not solve the interagency problems facing current joint task forces. As a measure of promoting information and intelligence sharing and solidifying unity of command, the president established the position of Director of National Intelligence to amalgamate sixteen independent intelligence collection agencies under one accountable leader. However, parochialism still persists among the various other departments of government in Washington and beyond.

The challenge requires the mobilization of a collective will and resources, including all elements of national power, as well as the concerted efforts of allies and the private sector. Many of the actions the U.S. Government must take in this war will occur outside of designated combat zones, requiring unprecedented cooperation among departments. A synchronized national plan that applies all the capabilities of the Nation and its coalition partners is needed more than ever. The military element of national power will be just one of many.⁵³

Many recognize the disjointed relationships throughout the interagency community thereby calling for new legislation which would in effect create a Goldwater-Nichols II reorganization initiative. Of course, the dynamics of forcing "Jointness" amongst the various agencies within the executive branch of government is likely not as

⁵² For the purposes of this paper, "Joint" when capitalized, alludes to more than just interservice operations; it also incorporates the interagency and multinational communities.

⁵³ Dailey and Webb, 45.

simple (though it is probably safe to say the DoD reorganization in the late 80s was anything but “simple”) as restructuring one department, particularly given the fact that while the military may have been hesitant, it is an institution known for obeying orders and following guidance to its intent. Restructuring the interagency community, while well intended, will require not only a cooperative effort amongst legislators, agency/department heads, but also a dynamic, insightful President who can mandate and enforce such a sweeping change throughout an indolent governmental structure unwilling to cede individual powers to a single higher authority.

Transformation of Forces

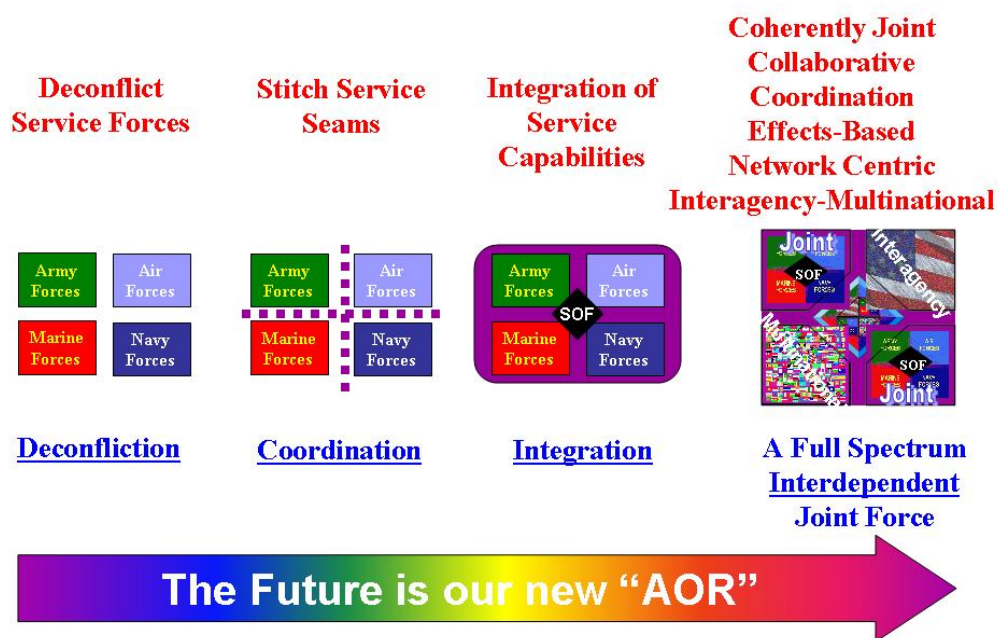


Figure 6. JFCOM Transformation Model (Deconfliction to Interdependence)⁵⁴

⁵⁴ Wagner, Robert, LTG, US Army, Deputy Commander, USJFCOM, “Security Planning and Military Transformation after Iraqi Freedom” briefing slides, 3 Dec 2003, accessed on the internet on 1 December 2006 at www.ifpafletcherconference.com/oldpowrpoint/2003/GeneralWagner.

Only in the last decade has the U.S. military become a joint (lower case 'j' intentional – indicating all of the military departments) force. Using the USJFCOM transformational model (Figure 6), it may be postulated that even as recent as Desert Shield/Storm in 1991, the military still operated as independent services that deconflicted operations as a method of working together (or avoiding the same). The progression of the model transformed deconflicted-operations to coordinated-, later integrated-operations with the present, ultimate goal of interdependent-operations. It also shows the progression from left to right from service-centric actions (Army, Air Force, Navy, etc) to functional capabilities (Air, Ground, Maritime, SOF) to the incorporation of systems, effects, tools, as well as the various actors being inherently reliant upon each other at the joint, interagency, and multinational levels. This full spectrum solution is aimed at providing the most efficient and effective response to any future needs, incorporating not only the military element of power, but also its role as one of the many elements striving toward a national, and perhaps international, strategic end.

The term Joint with a capital 'J' has come to indicate not only all of the military services/departments, but a wholesome inclusion of the interagency community as well as multinational partnerships. The new Joint is really J-I-M (joint, interagency, multinational). Only in the past decade has the transformation model been a four step progression/goal. Previously, jointness focused on a goal of integration⁵⁵ (the third step in Figure 6) – getting the services to operate together as incorporated functions, specifically understanding each other's culture, tactics, techniques and procedures, and even operating the same or at least compatible equipment, such as radios. Indeed,

⁵⁵ JP 1-02 defines integration as “the arrangement of military forces and their actions to create a force that operates by engaging as a whole.” This is an ample definition if focusing from a purely inter/intraservice viewpoint, however it lacks depth when considering all elements of power.

Goldwater-Nichols addressed and facilitated the solution to the DoD problem, but it could only reach so far and so deep.

In order to be truly Joint within the United States Government, many theorists, legislators, and experienced members of several governmental departments propose the sequel to Goldwater-Nichols legislation requiring all of the elements of national power to work together harmoniously under one chain of command. Strategist Michael Vickers, testifying before the House Armed Services Subcommittee on Terrorism affirmed: “Integrated Organizations will almost certainly be more effective at bringing to bear a fuller range of national and international capabilities than organization dominated by one department or agency.”⁵⁶ While “G-N II,” as it has become known, may be a move in the right direction, it is still an arduous, even improbable, goal given the institutional parochialisms throughout the US government. Meanwhile, the world continues to turn and the US military is left with “policing” many of its issues, problems, and present wars. The only way to address some of the complex problem sets is through agreements, handshakes, and mutually beneficial relationships throughout the Joint community.

Special Operations Forces instituted this interdependent relationship framework in late 2001 by organizing a special operations peculiar Joint Inter-Agency Task Force for Counter Terrorism (JIATF-CT) at the direction of the CDRUSCENTCOM. While JIATFs were not a completely new concept – JIATF-South in Key West has been in operation for nearly two decades – JIATF-CT was a very comprehensive task force with

⁵⁶ Vickers, Michael, Director of Strategic Studies at the Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments, Testimony before the Subcommittee on Terrorism, Unconventional Threats and Capabilities of the House Armed Services Committee, “Implementing GWOT Strategy: Overcoming Interagency Problems”, March 15, 2006.

Accessed on the internet on 19 September 2006 at

<http://www.csbaonline.org/4Publications/Archive/T.20060315.ImplementingGWOT/T.20060315.ImplementingGWOT.pdf>

agents, operators, and liaisons from dozens of other government organizations (OGAs).⁵⁷

In fact, this ad hoc organization, incorporating nearly every three-letter agency in the USG as well as partner nation representatives, set the model for that which USCENTCOM later gained legislative approval: the Joint Inter-Agency Coordination Group (JIACG). Since, JIACGs have become critical to numerous Combatant Commander's (CCDR) ability to incorporate, receive, and share information from numerous agencies external to the organic composition of the commands. Whereas JIACGs have received nothing but positive grades from planners and staffs across all of the geographic combatant commands, presently no two are the same and they remain active at the discretion of the CCDR. Why not make them part of each COCOM's Modified Table of Organization and Equipment? If the interagency approach is the way of the future, perhaps COCOMs should legislatively be organized with such capabilities.

So, why such interagency success at USSOCOM in particular? Perhaps it can be attributed to the strategic level of typical missions. Perhaps USSOCOM has the habitual relationships from numerous training exercises and coordination visits with agencies and partner nations. Some might even venture to argue that the USSOCOM budget attracts cooperation. As USSOCOM's budget continues to rise each year, few are too shy to keep from chasing the end of the rainbow.

To be sure, the model of JIATF-South points to a mutually beneficial relationship – an “interdependence,” the ultimate goal – in which both the military command as well

⁵⁷ “Over the last 17 years, the Joint Interagency Task Force-South (JIATF-S) has built an unparalleled network of law enforcement, intelligence, and military assets to focus on detecting the movements and shipments of narcoterrorist organizations. With this evolving structure, JIATF-S serves as a model for bringing the most effective assets to bear on complex national policy issues, whether it be illegal drugs, weapons proliferation, or international terrorism.” Richard M. Yeatman, “JIATF-South, Blueprint for Success,” *Joint Force Quarterly*, 42 (3rd Quarter, 2006), 26.

as the agencies' representatives all offer each other something, while enabling the greater good of the mission: that is, the same strategic or operational end. There exists no formal chain of command. In fact, the leader of JIATF-South is not a commander, but a director for that very reason. He possesses no command authority (except for the military members of the organization), but merely a directive role. Parallel linkages can certainly be drawn between USSOCOM elements and other joint, interagency, and multinational nodes. In both Iraq and Afghanistan, Joint Special Operations Task Forces exist as some of the most robust, representative, and effective elements of Joint interdependence in action throughout the AOR. Whereas military chains of command exploit unity of command, interagency chains must strive to seek unity of effort.

The recent announcement of the formal establishment of U.S. Africa Command is sure to be a model for developing such a truly Joint Command, and undoubtedly many will watch to gauge its successes or failures. And while USSOCOM doesn't have any civilians from other governmental departments in key leadership positions within the command architecture, it is a very robust and diverse organization.

Given that USSOCOM is comprised of Soldiers, Sailors (SEALs), Airmen, and recently Marines, it already is inherently more joint than any other Major Force Program budgeted service. Due to the small nature of most SOF elements, each functional component requires reliance upon its parent service and their inherent capabilities for things such as force protection, logistical support, mobility and counter-mobility capabilities, and fires to name just a few. Authors of the 2006 Quadrennial Defense Review understood the success of interdependent jointness within USSOCOM in predicting: "Long-duration, complex operations involving the U.S. military, other

government agencies and international partners will be waged simultaneously in multiple countries around the world, relying on a combination of direct (visible) and indirect (clandestine) approaches.”⁵⁸ The future of the military campaign must offer an operating environment in which operators, analysts, force multipliers, and commanders can capitalize on capabilities and negate the parochial biases of the “stove-piped” past.

Unless we can place in the field, in immediate support of the commander of the campaign, structures that obviate the boundaries of organizational culture and turf and fuse intelligence across disciplines, we risk overlooking important individual components as well as missing the big picture. Our analysts have to be provided an environment where they can work together productively. Immersing combinations of experts from the different disciplines in the operational problem and motivating them to find solutions under pressure will be essential.⁵⁹

Chapter 1, “Strategic Context” of JP 3-0 states,

The Armed Forces of the United States are most effective when employed as joint force. Further, joint force success requires unified action – the synchronization and/or integration of joint or multinational military operations with the activities of local, state, and other government agencies (OGAs); intergovernmental organizations (IGOs); and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) to achieve unity of effort.⁶⁰

While it may be some time before true interdependence between all Joint elements can be mandated, the military will continue to press onward in seeking to achieve the synergy of a full spectrum Joint Force as described in the USJFCOM transformational roadmap.

Without legislation, the opportunity to walk away exists; however, current and future operations exhibit how dedicated members of OGAs, IGOs, and NGOs elect to integrate with military staffs to work toward the ends defined by the National Command Authority.

This good faith effort can be seen throughout numerous military joint task forces and

⁵⁸ 2006 *QDR*, 23.

⁵⁹ Meigs, 14.

⁶⁰ Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff, *JP 3-0, Joint Operations*, (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 17 September 2006) I-1.

commands, particularly as evidenced by the resounding success seen in the GWOT's supported command. Joint with a capital J is certain to gain footing and become the interdependent mantra of the various elements of national power.

As special operations forces continue to operate throughout the world, particularly in the GWOT, they must continue to synchronize operations at the tactical, operational, and even strategic levels of war. They must become fully integrated with various other government agencies – synchronized with host nation country teams, for example. And finally, USSOCOM must continue to develop and execute contingency and crisis action plans which capitalize on the interdependent nature of all elements of national power at the theater and national strategic levels as the long war continues to be waged throughout the operational environment.

6. SHIFTING THE FOCUS WITHIN USSOCOM TOWARD NON-KINETICS

Speak softly and carry a big stick; you will go far.

– African Proverb

Undoubtedly, the employment of the military as an element of national power must always be considered as a last resort; however, once called upon, the Joint Force must be prepared to “protect, prevent, and prevail against adversaries”⁶¹ as outlined in the National Military Strategy.

Categorically, when most think of Special Operations Forces, they envision snipers, assaulters, divers, explosive ordnance experts: commandos. Indeed, these finishing forces are some of the finest tactical operators in the military’s ranks, but the mantra of the United States being the proverbial hammer and every problem in the world being viewed as a symbolic nail – read as: committing the military kinetically to solve every situation of unrest – is a failing strategy from the start. To misunderstand the shaping, influencing, and deterrent forces (i.e. SF detachments, PSYOPS and Civil Affairs teams, FID units) which are vital to SOF is to fail to understand the strategic impact and true necessity of SOF. Their unique skill sets are critical to conducting shaping operations and flexible deterrent options on a regional scale. This chapter will acknowledge that while USSOCOM must maintain its direct action forces and capabilities, it must bring its other shaping and influencing forces and capabilities to the

⁶¹ Department of Defense, *National Military Strategy* (Washington, D.C., 2004), iii. This **protect, prevent, prevail** paradigm will be used in the Chapter 9 to show how SOF enact their mission to achieve the strategic objectives of the nation. It is similarly incorporated into Joint Doctrine, specifically JP 3-0, when referring to the ranges of military operations.

front of the line as it takes the lead against the current problem set facing our generation and likely generations to come.

SOF was charged with the overall responsibility for the conduct of the global war because it possesses a tool box that can range problems throughout the conflict continuum, and when unable to handle unilaterally, empower sister services, coalition partners and the interagency to bring in their assets to fix the problem. That is, some situations require leaving the hammer in the tool box in favor of more subtle, indirect solutions.

In fact, in its overall strategy for the global war on terror, USSOCOM has devised five lines of operation for combating the enemy (Figure 7). Two of these are direct in nature and allow/require kinetic means to defeat the enemy; more importantly, three of the lines of operation employ non-kinetic methods to defeat the enemy through indirect approaches (influencing the environment).

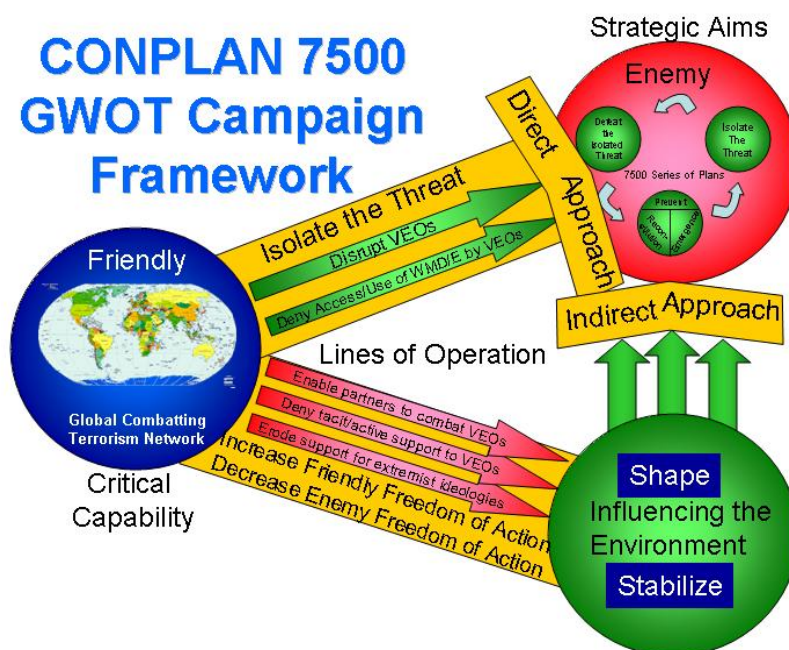


Figure 7. USSOCOM CONPLAN 7500 Methodology⁶²

This strategy exhibits USSOCOM's analysis of the problem set and demonstrates the command's resolve to take whatever methods necessary to not only smite the enemy in the short term, but to address the greater problem of a long term solution to this lengthy war of ideologies. USSOCOM's emphasis on directing assets and efforts toward shaping the environment exhibits an insightful understanding of the situation and a modern realization that singular reliance on direct methods may only prolong, or even hurt, the efforts to win in the end. However, developing a concept and putting it into practice are far from synonymous and are a difficult undertaking.

⁶² Adapted from USSOCOM CONPLAN 7500-06, Rev 1, Base Plan (28 October 2006), 17. (SECRET//REL US, GBR, AUS) NOTE: VEOs – Violent Extremist Organizations

Historically, USSOCOM has not done a good job of balancing the emphasis on non-kinetic options versus the commando style raids for which it is popularly known. In his testimony with GEN (R) Wayne Downing and Michael Vickers before the House Armed Services Subcommittee on Terrorism, Unconventional Threats, and Capabilities in June 2006, author and strategist Max Boot proposed a new organization within USSOCOM: the Unconventional Warfare Command akin to JSOC level authorities and interagency coordination allowances. He astutely argued,

To defeat this Islamist insurgency we must be able not only to track down and capture or kill hard-core terrorists but also to carry out civil affairs and information operations to win the "hearts and minds" of the great mass of uncommitted Muslims. We are very good at eliminating top terrorists, once they have been found (witness Abu Musab al-Zarqawi's death); less good at finding them (Osama bin Laden and Ayman al-Zawahiri are still at large); and less skilled still at changing the conditions that breed terrorism in the first place (look at the continuing violence in Iraq and Afghanistan).⁶³

Effectively, what Boot proposed is that the SOF community must maintain its capabilities to win kinetically when necessary, but it must expand its focus to recreate what once existed after the Second World War, the OSS. This idea undoubtedly will meet criticism from some traditionalists within USSOCOM, however, he makes a valid point. We cannot and will not win the long war with only a hammer. SOF must retain its unique ability to shape the environment making it inhospitable for the foes of the United States and its allies. Noting the change in focus during the past few years of kinetic fights, some graybeards take issue with the direction of the force.

⁶³ Max Boot, Testimony before the House Armed Services Subcommittee on Terrorism, Unconventional Threats, and Capabilities, Washington DC, 29 June 2006 accessed on the internet on 20 November 2006 at <http://www.cfr.org/publication/11027/>

Many retired SF experts have noticed the trend to focus on door-kicking at the expense of the long term beneficial missions unique to the Green Beret forces. Said retired Lieutenant Colonel Mark Haselton, "My concern is that all we're focused on is direct action, to the absolute exclusion of all other things. If we the spend the rest of our lives 'capturing and killing' terrorists at the expense of those SF missions that are more important—gaining access to the local population, training indigenous forces, providing expertise and expanding capacity—we're doomed to failure."⁶⁴ LTC Haselton makes a good point: you cannot kill them all. There simply are not enough beans and bullets (not to mention legitimacy and all the rest of the world's view). Shaping the environment to become a proverbial self-licking ice cream cone (teach others to police their own problems) will alleviate the need for U.S. forces to have to do the lion's share of the work.

Similarly neglected at the expense of the sexier assault forces (i.e. Rangers, SEALs, etc) are the civil affairs and psychological operations units. They have been historically assigned under USSOCOM, however many of the reserve component forces have been relegated back to their services. One might also infer from their heavy reliance on the reserve force – almost 95 percent of PSYOPs and Civil Affairs units are in the Army and Marine Reserve Component – that it is because their skill sets lend them to pull from the private sector in which experts utilize their skills in their day jobs. This might be true, but it also sends a message that their skills are only required on an as needed basis, thereby relegating them to the second tier forces, which habitually receive less attention, funding, and emphasis. To address the prior neglect for these vital functional areas, the Army for one has only recently executed its proposal to make both

⁶⁴ Sean Naylor, "More than Doorkickers," *Armed Forces Journal*, (March 2006) 28.

civil affairs and psychological operations separate branches within the service. This measure will allow more focus on the career fields not just as areas of specialty, but leadership will now track careers, monitor promotions, and dedicate key personnel to key assignments giving the branches equal footing with sister branches.

Another area of concern within USSOCOM is the number of deployable SF teams. There simply are not enough recruits, veterans, and bodies to plug all of the holes in the dam at the current pace to meet the requirements necessary to remain engaged in the global war. These teams, like many specialty functions within all of the services, are burning their best to simply meet minimum mission requirements. That is not to even address emergencies, schools, un-forecast missions, etc. In an effort to fix this, SF will grow by one third over the next several years as directed in the 2006 QDR. However, a current option would be to use the present SEAL teams in the Navy in this capacity as well. Whereas the Army teams focus on foreign assistance and engagement (while maintaining direct action capabilities), Navy SEAL teams typically focus on special reconnaissance and direct action skills while maintaining limited engagement skills such as medical assistance training, foreign language training, etc. Truth be told, having units trained for kinetic fights is a necessity, but they will only be employed in such a capacity in the exceptions, vice having them trained to conduct crisis prevention for the majority of the time while maintaining the break-glass-in-case-of-emergency skills as well.

Army SF teams typically operate while remaining below the radar in working with partner nations and governments to achieve long term effects which are in concert with the National Security Strategy of the United States.

Today, efforts large and small on five continents demonstrate the importance of being able to work with and through partners, to operate

clandestinely and to sustain a persistent but low visibility presence. Such efforts represent an application of the indirect approach to the long war.⁶⁵

Furthermore, these non-traditional approaches to military operations often net a much larger, long-term gain, particularly in the context of what many are calling today's operating environment – the global insurgency:

Unconventional war, though it sounds sinister, actually represents the soft, humanitarian side of counterinsurgency: how to win without firing a shot. For example, it may include relief activities that generate good will among indigenous populations, which in turn produces actionable intelligence. Direct action represents more-traditional military operations.⁶⁶

This is not to say that SOF is broken, however. Indeed many areas need attention and the USSOCOM command and staff recognize the need to transform while synchronizing and leading a long war throughout the globe. Thus, the two-pronged approach indicated in CONPLAN 7500 to pit direct action with an indirect approach as part of the total package deal. The SOF community has a plethora of experienced, skilled, multidimensional leaders who understand the pitfalls of commando-centric operations and are doing what they can with what they have to merge the hard and soft powers to complete the package.

It goes without saying that deterring armed conflict is much less costly – not necessarily cheap – than going to war. Much of the recent organization, training, and equipping functions within USSOCOM have been directed toward these conflict-prevention type operations. Namely, SOF has begun placing more emphasis on the softer missions which include interagency intelligence collection, civil affairs, and psychological operations. Some of this is done formally through

⁶⁵ 2006 *QDR*, 11.

⁶⁶ Robert Kaplan, "Imperial Grunts" *The Atlantic Monthly*, 296, no. 3, (Oct 2005) 84.

uniquely suited personnel and organizations, but much is also done through Special Forces teams conducting training with foreign governments.

Without a doubt, USSOCOM has a full plate and is doing a remarkable job of leading the Defense Department in the GWOT, and even to a significant degree incorporating the interagency community – almost as if they have cracked (although not yet solved) the GN-II code among the interagency – toward a common interdependent way of winning.

Their model for addressing not only the capture/kill piece, but also the shaping of the environment and enabling partners to aide the effort is a sign that they are in synch with the National Strategy and moving toward a Special Operations Force which remains the most lethal – but also has the potential to be the most influential – arm of the Defense Department. In the present and future, they must seek to maintain the proper balance in mission, thereby not only increasing internal capacity and ability, but also enabling others through subtle means:

For direct action, SOF will possess an expanded organic ability to locate, tag, and track dangerous individuals and other high-value targets globally. For unconventional warfare and training foreign forces, future SOF will have the capacity to operate in dozens of countries simultaneously. SOF will have increased ability to train and work with partners, employ surrogates, operate clandestinely and sustain a larger posture with lower visibility.⁶⁷

To win a long war, to win ultimately, the focus must lean heavily toward shaping, enabling, and coercing others via soft power rather than always taking the hard, kinetic approach. The leadership of USSOCOM has demonstrated that they intend to do just that. They recognize the limitations of the capture/kill methodology, though it certainly is needed for certain situations. The next challenge considered is not only how

⁶⁷ 2006 *QDR*, 44.

USSOCOM can train indigenous forces in foreign lands, but how they can assimilate into conventional fights (such as OIF) and even more so how they can integrate their objectives with those of U.S. conventional forces when operating within the same operational environment. Joint doctrine leaves the conventional planner wanting, as the next chapter will show.

7. DOCTRINE FOR JOINT SPECIAL OPERATIONS

*“A doctrine of war consists first in a common way
of objectively approaching the subject....”*

-- Ferdinand Foch

Whereas JP 3-0 is the capstone doctrine for joint operations, one of its nested sub-documents is JP 3-05, Doctrine for Joint Special Operations. As can be expected, the recent September 2006 revision of JP 3-0 addresses many fundamental aspects of operations, such as the strategic context, the fundamentals of joint operations, the link to JP 5-0: “Planning,” and how to incorporate operational art and operational design. These in depth chapters describe joint operations and give the lay person a decent understanding of some of the intricacies of planning and executing joint operations. Of course, the document by itself is not intended to be a roadmap, but it does a sufficient job of covering the essentials needed to relate to joint operations.

Like its series base document, JP 3-05 also covers the fundamentals. It provides an overview, a description of forces and core tasks, command and control considerations, support, and education and training for special operations forces. But that is where the similarities diverge. If one were to take out the pictures and the charts (many of which are famously scattered throughout the rest of joint and service doctrine, such as the principles of war), JP 3-05 is only about 20-30 pages of text – most of which is definitions and lists, which, while relevant and necessary, do not address to much detail the actual employment of special operations forces. Aside from consulting the Theater Special Operations Command (TSOC) elements – consulting subject matter experts should be standard procedure for any specialty in any staff – where does a J-5 planner for a Combatant Command go to understand the employment and differences of a SF

Operational Detachment or a SEAL Team? Where does a strategic planner go to understand the integration of SOF air with conventional air assets? When setting up logistical support packages, how large is a Joint Special Operations Task Force staff and what unique requirements do they need? Doctrine says to consult the liaison elements, but where is the common standard written? Does USPACOM employ SOF the same as USEUCOM? Undoubtedly, the right answer for a J-5 planner is to consult the resident experts in their field. They will certainly be helpful and critical to merging the plan together, but JP 3-05 falls slightly short of the mark in that it is a one-way document. “JP 3-05 addresses liaison between SOF and Conventional Forces as a SOF responsibility at all levels of the Joint Force, but has little information on reciprocal conventional liaison to SOF, which is needed when supporting-supported roles are reversed as they were in OEF.”⁶⁸ Fortunately, JPs 3-05.1 and 3-05.2 do go into greater depth and break down specifics for setting up Joint Special Operations Task Forces and conducting Targeting and Mission Planning to a greater degree of specificity. Furthermore, the Joint Special Operations University publishes several planning handbooks which cover much of what doctrine lacks, but what is needed is *doctrine* which standardizes employment of these uniquely versatile forces.

Conventional planners often get frustrated with SOF planners for a multitude of reasons: OPSEC hinders a need to know or the personality portion of the equation hinders an open line of communication. This linkage, now more than ever, must become a fluid avenue to exchange information, lessons learned, and forces and capabilities to achieve a common objective. SOF doctrine needs to specifically address the integration

⁶⁸ William J. Carty, MAJ, US Army, “An Unconventional Look at Training and Education to Improve Conventional and SOF Integration,” *2004-2005 JSOU/NDIA Essays, JSOU Report 1*, (JSOU Press: April 2005) 3.

of conventional forces with special operations forces, and it must outline the difference when SOF is supported or supporting. It should also cover the integration of the interagency elements into SOF planning and operations.

A glaring omission in JP 3-05 is any mention of Joint Interagency Task Forces (JIATF) or Joint Interagency Coordination Groups (JIACGs). Admittedly, the concept is relatively new: “the NSC established in March 2002 a ‘limited capability’ JIACG in each regional command. This approval came with three DOD-funded positions for the representatives from Treasury, State, and Justice at each COCOM.”⁶⁹ The JIATF concept is somewhat more mature and utilized by SOF commanders in present deployed Joint Operation Centers (JOC). While JIATFs and JIACGs are a mere organization and/or function within commands, they were initially stood up within COCOMs to address counterterrorism coordination efforts. Being that counterterrorism is a core task of SOF, it would seem logical that the capstone document would make mention of them as a key part of the interagency integration effort. JP 3-05 would do well to dedicate some text to the importance of integrating the interagency, which contributes so much to SOF, into commands and missions. Further, in comparison with Army Field Manual (FM) 3-05, it seems somewhat unfortunate that the service publication provides a more robust consideration for integrating conventional forces with SOF than does the joint series publication. The FM states, “the integration and synchronization of ARSOF with other joint operations and conventional forces operations are critical.”⁷⁰ It then follows with a list of areas of interest for commanders, planners and staffs to consider, as an

⁶⁹ Neyla Arnas, Charles Barry, and Robert B. Oakly, *Harnessing the Interagency for Complex Operations*, Center for Technology and National Security Policy: National Defense University (Aug 2005), 9.

⁷⁰ Headquarters, Department of the Army, *FM 3-05, Army Special Operations Forces* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, Sep 2006) 4-16.

example. JP 3-05 needs a robust revision to provide more depth which will give planners on COCOM staffs more knowledge and comprehension with which to plan.

8. INTEGRATION OF CONVENTION FORCES WITH SOF (AND VICE VERSA)

The drawdown after the Vietnam War reduced US Army Special Forces units by one third. They took a serious cut in funding and training as the focus shifted toward Eastern Europe and the classically conventional fight of the Cold War against the Soviet Union. The Navy similarly decommissioned its only special operations capable submarine, opting for nuclear-armed strategic platforms, and the Air Force's focus supported the same.

The failed hostage rescue attempt in Iran in 1980 demonstrated a lack of training and preparedness of many of the forces involved, which, as mentioned, led to a significant amount of attention being put toward not only interservice cooperation, but also to the development of air, ground, and sea-focused special operations forces. A tremendous effort ensued in which SOF was built to be the nation's singular finest strike capability. What the ensuing fixes over the next few years didn't provide however, was a roadmap or methodology for integration of conventional and special operations forces. Speculation has it that this was not all by accident either. The national command authority developed many capabilities in the 1980s that focused on remaining "below the radar." In fact, the nation did need such capabilities, but what was not known was the scope of these forces' limitations. Nor were considerations brought up as to how all of these forces would operate together.

One would think the lessons learned from Eagle Claw in Iran would have negated many of the same issues which only three years later arose again in Grenada. It is said

that the poor unity of command and egos among generals nearly sidelined the US forces before even a one stepped off.

As the planning for and the events of the U.S. intervention into Grenada in 1983 revealed, there were misperceptions and a lack of understanding, both among the “conventional” forces as to the capabilities and limitations of SOF forces, and within JSOC of the utility of the “reconnaissance and support teams.”⁷¹

This near failure led to differences in opinion between conventional and special operations forces which plagued both sides arguably until even quite recently.

Like many personality issues which plague society in general, such as cultural and racial biases, the root of the problems can most often be traced to a lack of understanding. The same can be said within the services, but understanding is only the beginning. To truly overcome the issue, both sides must integrate. The former mindset for deployment of SOF in the vicinity of conventional forces called for a separate-but-equal mindset. Conventional forces would be given one mission set or one piece of terrain; SOF would get another. A never the two should meet. Not exactly a recipe for success, particularly in such a dynamic environment as military combat operations.

Whereas Desert Storm similarly followed the mantra of separate-but-equal, (Schwarzkopf was said to have been skeptical of SOF’s ability to deliver) today’s operations in the CENTCOM AOR paint a strikingly different picture. JP 3-05 does address the fact that SOF relies upon parent services for logistical support. It similarly states that “SOF are not a substitute for conventional forces, but a necessary adjunct to existing conventional capabilities. Depending upon requirements, SOF can operate

⁷¹ Rod Lenehan, *Crippled Eagle*, (Charleston: Narwhal Press, 1998), 203.

independently or in conjunction with conventional forces.”⁷² Whereas SOF in the past routinely operated well ahead of conventional forces both in time and space, today’s fight requires both forces to operate in the same operational environment, often at the same time. More so, conventional units regularly defer certain target sets within their area of operations to SOF, and SOF regularly attach conventional forces to provide security, blocking forces, and large scale sweeps within their mission sets. Today’s environment is occupied by a transformed force, where all forces and functions operate interdependently – or at least are closer to interdependence than ever before. But what is lacking is integrated training. And the consequence of a lack of training in a combat environment points to a bad conclusion.

To show that the times have changed and the cultural power-struggles are largely (but not completely to be honest) a thing of the past, today’s home station training involves some conventional units training with SOF counterparts prior to deployment. While this still may be the exception to the rule, it *is* happening. And SOF units are being augmented with conventional combat power to make up for their lack of mass.

This is not to say that all is well in war, however. Compatibility issues with communications and equipment still arise. Even though most of SOF equipment can be traced to service-procured items, many pieces are still too unique, modified beyond the compatibility of other service-born items. Often SOF systems are unique, commercial off the shelf (COTS) items or capabilities engineered and designed under classified programs which obviously are not like service generic systems.

⁷² Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff, *JP 3-05, Joint Special Operations*, (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 17 December 2003) II-2.

At a minimum, units expected to work together OCONUS, should allocate the time and effort to link up in CONUS prior to deploying to exchange ideas at the leader level. If possible, bilateral/multilateral training should be conducted. Actual training scenarios should be rehearsed. All elements should train to the standards expected in a real world situation. Deficiencies or concerns must be addressed and fixed so that situations that arise in stressful situations have predictable responses from all sides.

Early after action reviews from the initial operations in Operation Iraqi Freedom and Operation Enduring Freedom in 2003 resulted in several positive conclusions from the Joint Forces Command. Namely, the command identified “SOF-Conventional Integration” as a capability that reached new levels of performance and needed to be sustained and improved.⁷³

Perhaps one of the areas in which Special Forces do some of their best integrated work is with multinational partners. Due to the regional focuses of many of the Army’s Special Forces groups, many remain deployed throughout the world on a constant basis honing their language, cultural, and tactical skills by engaging partner nations in various bilateral and multilateral training events and programs. So too can be said for Navy SEALs and Air Force pararescue and controller teams. These elements interact with foreign governments, specifically militaries, to advance U.S. national strategic interests such as counterterrorism, counternarcotics, free trade and humanitarian assistance. Much of the focus of these regional deployments is training on unconventional warfare tactics, police enforcement of sovereign law, and support to legitimate governments. In countries with which the U.S. is tightly allied, such as the United Kingdom and Australia, SOF bilateral training lends itself to forces operating together in a mutually beneficial manner.

⁷³ Wagner.

Tactics and techniques are shared, procedures are rehearsed, and exchanges are made. In the end, the deployments provide various benefits to Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen, and Marines at the tactical level and national leaders at the strategic level.

It is hard to imagine anyone arguing against a more integrated approach between special operations forces and other forces, particularly the U.S. conventional units. Whereas biases may exist on a surface level, senior Non-commissioned officers and Officers understand the unique differences and need for separate forces that have inherent differences in missions and roles, but coexisting objectives in the greater end. Some missions require plausible deniability (low visibility evacuation of foreign head of state), some just cannot be made public (U.S. operations in denied countries), and others require a small, light force with unique skills (special reconnaissance team) not inherent to a MEF or Corps. Then too there are missions for which special operations forces are not suited: tank engagement in Iraqi desert. On the other hand, as the Afghanistan and Iraqi wars continue, there is many an instance in which SOF and conventional forces have had to plan and conduct missions in support of one another and in concert with one another. How SOF conducts tactical actions to achieve strategic objectives will be addressed in the following chapter.

9. TACTICAL STRATEGY OR STRATEGIC TACTICS?

The true aim (of strategy) is not so much to seek battle as to seek a strategic situation so advantageous that if it does not of itself produce the decision, its continuation by a battle is sure to achieve this.

-- Sir Basil Liddell Hart, 1954

To accomplish the *strategic* objectives of the nation, one must understand strategy, and therein be able to link tactical tasks to strategy through operational design. Special Operations Forces (SOF) is comprised of mature, veteran Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen, and Marines who do just that – tie tactics to strategy. These quiet professionals routinely deploy in small autonomous elements; shoulder the tough, risky, often complex tasks; and accomplish strategic missions using unconventional means to produce the desired effect. Unlike traditionally larger conventional forces, special operations forces routinely employ a near-direct linkage between tactical actions and strategic results on a smaller, more linear scale (Figure 8).

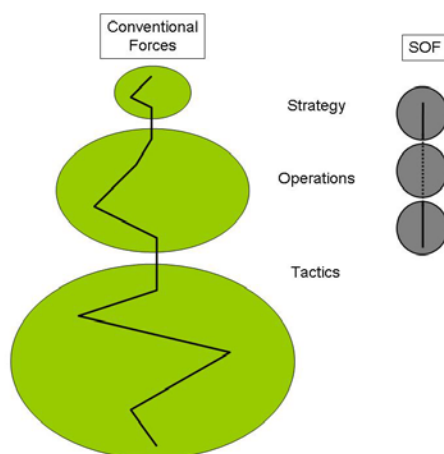


Figure 8. Conventional vs. SOF: Comparison of Linkages between Levels of War

The 2005 Quadrennial Defense Review directed SOF “to perform the most demanding and sensitive missions worldwide,” increasing “their capacity to perform specialized tasks, especially long-duration, indirect and clandestine operations in politically sensitive environments and denied areas.”⁷⁴ This demonstrated the grave responsibility of SOF operators to execute a variety of missions with very strategic consequence – a burden not lightly imparted by the National Command Authority. USSOCOM’s vision is “To be the premier team of special warriors, thoroughly prepared, properly equipped, and highly motivated: at the right place, at the right time, facing the right adversary, leading the Global War on Terrorism, accomplishing the strategic objectives of the United States.”⁷⁵

This chapter will show how Special Operations Forces, as an integrated element of the nation’s power, execute tactical operations employing strategic principles⁷⁶ throughout the environment to achieve the military strategic objectives as directed by policy-makers. In looking through a virtual lens with Agility, Decisiveness, and Integration as the filters, this chapter will show how SOF has, in the past, and will, in the future, be able to protect the nation and its interests, prevent attacks, and prevail⁷⁷ in its strategic missions (Figure 9).

⁷⁴2006 *QDR*, 43-44.

⁷⁵ Bryan D. Brown, GEN, USA, Commander, USSOCOM, *Posture Statement 2006* (Washington, D.C., 2006), i. Revised from previous motto of “Anytime, Anyplace.”

⁷⁶ The 2004 *National Military Strategy* identifies three strategic capabilities to guide the development of joint operations concepts and the capabilities the joint force requires: **Agility, Decisiveness, and Integration.**

⁷⁷ *National Military Strategy*, 3.

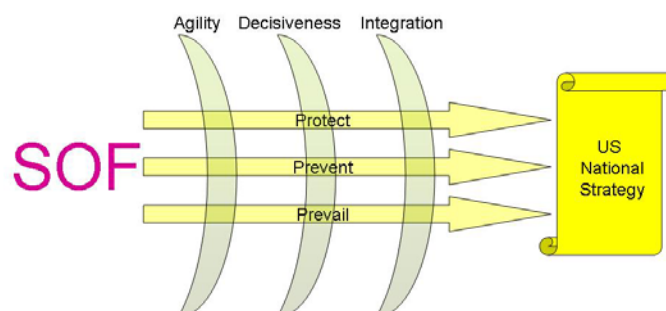


Figure 9. Principles to Enact National Strategy

To make this critical link between tactics and strategy, SOF must not only train to their individual and collective skills, but they must understand the relationship to the effects and how their operations impact military and national strategy. As mentioned in the opening paragraph of this chapter, this requires a keen awareness of strategy.

According to Dr. Harry R. Yarger, Professor of National Security Policy at the U.S. Army War College,

“Strategy is the art and science of developing and using the [political, economic, social-psychological, and] military powers of the state in accordance with policy guidance to create effects that protect or advance national interests relative to other states, actors, or circumstances.”⁷⁸

Indeed, SOF can be an inherently scientific force, pervaded with technological tools and methods, but it is even more so an art, a community of people – “humans are more important than hardware” (SOF Truth #1)⁷⁹. One of the many abiding qualities inherent in SOF is the unconventional thought process and outside-the-box methodology for mission accomplishment. SOF professionals are selected and trained based on their ability to independently think and act. “The theory of strategy teaches the military

⁷⁸ Harry R. Yarger, *Strategic Theory for the 21st Century: The Little Book on Big Strategy*, (Strategic Studies Institute, Feb 2006), 1.

⁷⁹ “First approved for use by then-COL Sid Shacknow in the mid-1980s, later publicized by GEN Wayne Downing as a way to codify the need for quality people.” *USSOCOM History* (2002), 18.

professional ‘how to think’ about strategy, not ‘what to think’ for a strategy.”⁸⁰ This allows operational commanders to focus on providing mission intent and the desired end state or effects. They direct the objective (ends) and allow subordinate tactical operators to apply the resources (means) to develop the concept (ways) of execution.⁸¹ Tactical planning is routinely delegated to the team level, leaving operational planners to focus on the effects and strategic results. In the case of the present strategic environment, SOF not only has an outward focus (abroad), but it also must be prepared to take action to protect the nation (in CONUS as well as indirectly overseas), as identified in the military’s strategic objectives of protect, prevent, and if necessary, prevail.

Strategic Objective #1: Protect

It is the stated first duty of the United States Government: “to protect the American people and American interests. To forestall or prevent hostile acts by our adversaries, the United States will, if necessary, act preemptively in exercising our inherent right of self-defense.”⁸² As it applies to USSOCOM, the commander must organize, train, and equip his forces to not only remain globally focused, but agile enough to also protect U.S. personnel and interests against attacks on the homeland. For the most part, SOF forces are the nation’s preemptive military arm, by deploying teams to regional hot spots to conduct foreign internal defense missions as well as various methods of intelligence collection and ultimately crisis prevention. This outward focus allows operators at the tactical level to deny enemy sanctuary in disenfranchised populations, but also to know and understand the regional issues which might lend to attacks on the homeland. USSOCOM, a functional combatant command, also retains forces able to be

⁸⁰ Yarger, 75.

⁸¹ Yarger, 69-70. Yarger’s concept of applying ends, ways, means to objectives, concepts, and resources.

⁸² *National Security Strategy*, 18.

apportioned in support of efforts within the national borders, such as reactions to weapons of mass destruction (WMD) attacks. Moreover, it is one of the Department of Defense's lead organizations in acquiring, interpreting, and acting on fusion of all-source intelligence through its organic and interagency linkages. Perhaps more important than its ability to react to attacks, SOF maintains an aggressively preemptive posture on denying attacks against U.S. personnel and interests by actively collecting intelligence. This find ability allows U.S. forces to exploit their agility and transition to fix and finish capabilities, as required. SOF personnel conducting intelligence collection missions are keenly able to make appropriate linkages between their tactical level analysis and information which often has strategic implications.

It is well documented that the most significant failure in the 9/11 attack on the United States resulted from poor integration of intelligence analysis, ultimately forcing the policymakers in Washington to mandate integration at the highest levels of government.⁸³ The National Military Strategy also acknowledges this failure, as stated: "Protecting the United States also requires integrating military capabilities with other government and law enforcement agencies."⁸⁴ As part of the transformation of the entire Defense Department, USSOCOM is making an aggressive effort to populate personnel throughout the interagency community, not necessarily so much as liaisons, but as SOF representatives, able to synthesize information and provide recommendations to the strategic decision-makers both at USSOCOM and the interagency. Additionally, at the tactical levels, joint, interagency, and coalition partners are training and fighting together. In fact, during the initial deployment of troops to Operation Enduring Freedom, US SOF

⁸³ Director of National Intelligence serves as intelligence advisor to National Security Council and oversees more than a dozen intelligence agencies to include the National Counterterrorism Center (NCTC).

⁸⁴ *National Military Strategy*, 2.

teams fought along side both CIA operatives as well as Northern Alliance soldiers to defeat the Taliban forces. This critical integration enabled small teams with tremendous tactical and operational capability to topple a regime that had crippled Afghanistan for years, enabling the government to transition toward a free and democratic society⁸⁵.

Furthermore, the director of the Center for Special Operations, USSOCOM, led an effort to imbed as many agency and law enforcement officials as possible within his directorate to enhance information synchronization. The “interagency, conventional, and coalition relationships have never been stronger.”⁸⁶ This transformational effort, consistent with the Defense Department’s way ahead, to integrate partners with SOF is similarly critical to US policy of prevention against the terrorist life cycle.

Strategic Objective #2: Prevent

As seen in Figure 10, USSOCOM developed an adaptive strategy to address the cycle of terrorism, seeking out to first prevent the emergence of a threat, then to isolate it, defeat it, and finally to prevent the reemergence of it.⁸⁷

⁸⁵ This supports one of the pillars upon which the US National Security Strategy is founded: promoting freedom, justice and human dignity.

⁸⁶ USSOCOM Annual Report (Washington, D.C.: 2005), 9.

⁸⁷ Dailey and Webb, p. 46-47.

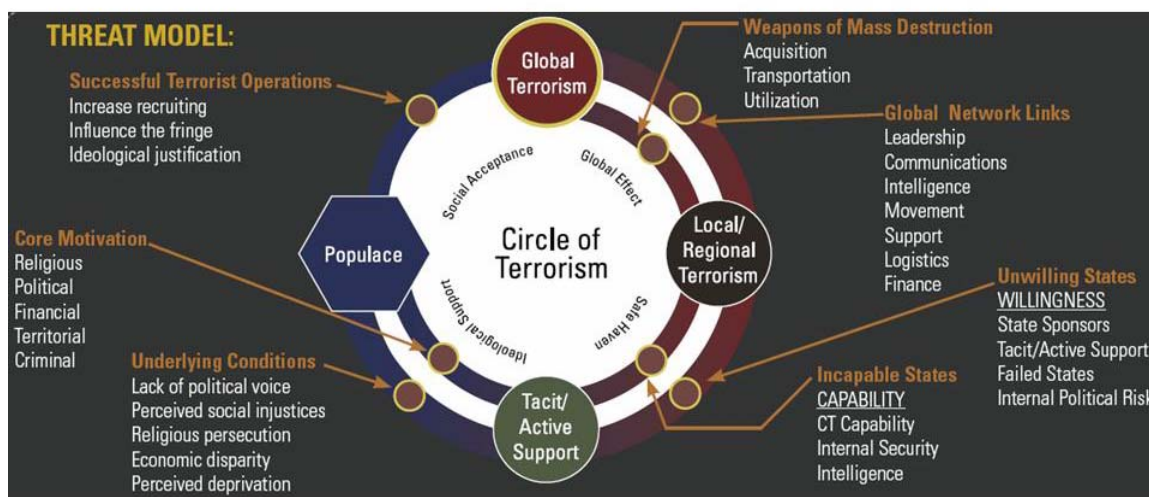


Figure 10. USSOCOM Terrorism Threat Model⁸⁸

As it applies to the tactician, SOF teams are presently engaged on the ground around the world training forces to deny safe haven for terrorist movements. Through these foreign internal defense missions, civil affairs missions, and psychological operations, the United States can project its interests worldwide by promoting truth and denying networks from being able to recruit and train would-be terrorists.

SOF preempts the adversary by neutralizing its capabilities before the fight — either directly or in support of conventional forces. SOF do this through FID and UW efforts to build indigenous defense and intelligence capabilities; PSYOP directed at the adversary's leadership, armed forces, and populace; civil-military operations (CMO) in areas brought under friendly control.⁸⁹

The direct impact of these SOF missions allows the United States to maintain a forward presence regionally or deploy additional forces as necessary. In fact, by knowing the population, these SOF teams can provide intelligence back to the collection agencies to fuse a picture of potential threatening trends.

⁸⁸ USSOCOM 2006 Posture Statement, 4.

⁸⁹ JP 3-05, I-8.

In a preemptive measure further exemplifying agility and integration, in the spring of 2004, SOF forces from the Army, Navy and Air Force alerted and deployed to Haiti as part of a stabilization presence to link up with State Department officials to ensure the peaceful regime change amid a potentially hostile coup. Its significance acknowledged in the QDR: “this early action prevented the collapse of political and social structures in the country, averted a humanitarian crisis, and established a more secure and stable environment.”⁹⁰ This again demonstrates the impact of a small element of SOF implementing the national strategy of the United States: promoting freedom and confronting our national challenges, such as humanitarian assistance and regional stability. Furthermore, promoting security and deterring aggression are just two of the tenets outlined as part of the preventative military strategy of the United States.

As part of President George W. Bush’s preventative strategy in 2003 (attack Iraq before Hussein could harm America or its interests), SOF again deployed to the western provinces of Iraq to set the conditions for conventional forces to attack from the south. They were further responsible for denying the Hussein regime’s ability to use WMDs or sabotage the country’s oil and energy production facilities. While these teams were part of a much larger major regional conflict, they operated autonomously within their operational guidance, demonstrating agility and decisiveness in their combat actions. Not unlike its conventional brethren, SOF remains a force that can quickly transition from operating in the middle of the conflict continuum – stability operations, irregular warfare, Foreign Internal Defense – to the much more aggressive right end (combat operations). When protection and prevention aren’t enough, SOF offers a unique set of options to prevail.

⁹⁰ 2006 QDR, 13-14.

Strategic Objective #3: Prevail

Understandably, the United States can ill-afford to react to every security dilemma by deploying its military to respond with kinetic actions. It must seek to first prevent hostility and enact its strategy through other more civil elements of national power such as diplomacy and economics. However, should these measures fail or the security situation dictate military action, the Department of Defense must retain options to fight and prevail decisively in support of our national objectives. In our nation's very recent past, military forces have deployed to areas such as Korea, Vietnam, Bosnia, Kosovo and Iraq twice, to name a few. But special operations elements have been deployed abroad continuously for the last several decades conducting missions throughout the conflict continuum. Some of the sensitive missions remain classified. This low visibility capability allows the national leadership to retain its ability to prevail when other options might not be feasible. It similarly allows the U.S. military to remain engaged when overt war is not being waged, by shaping the environment as written in Joint Publication 3-0, Joint Operations:

SOF plays a major role in preparing and shaping the operational area and environment by setting conditions which mitigate risk and facilitate successful follow-on operations. The regional focus, cross-cultural/ethnic insights, language capabilities, and relationships of SOF provide access to and influence in nations where the presence of conventional US forces is unacceptable or inappropriate. SOF contributions can provide operational leverage by gathering critical information, undermining a potential adversary's will or capacity to wage war, and enhancing the capabilities of conventional US, multinational, or indigenous/surrogate forces.⁹¹

SOF elements throughout the joint community provide unique capabilities to the President, giving him agile military options when deployment of conventional forces might otherwise be excessively overt, logistically cumbersome, or internationally

⁹¹ JP 3-0, V-5.

unacceptable. These teams are trained and resourced to operate autonomously in foreign countries; they often speak foreign languages, understand the cultures, and seamlessly integrate with country team to conduct planning and if necessary, military action.

Special Operations Forces are selected and trained to be agile, decisive, and integrate into whatever environment is available. When tasked, they can operate on the right end of the continuum conducting direct action missions in support of national strategic objectives. In these instances, when all other options have been exhausted, they must prevail.

The paradigm of protect, prevent, prevail must be used by our national leaders when developing a security strategy for our nation and its interests. Special operations forces fit neatly into this mold through their various unique facets such as civil-military affairs, psychological operations, and the various missions performed by the tactical operators throughout USSOCOM. As emphasized by Sir Basil Liddell Hart, strategy must be achieved through indirect methods rather than going kinetic early.

In strategy the longest way round is often the shortest way there; a direct approach to the object exhausts the attacker and hardens the resistance by compression, whereas an indirect approach loosens the defender's hold by upsetting his balance.⁹²

This chapter has shown the uniqueness of special operations forces to operate throughout the conflict continuum by linking tactics directly to strategy. It has shown how SOF has been employed in the past – and will sure to be similarly used in the future – to *protect* the nation both at home and in foreign lands; how its personnel and units *prevent* further aggression through engagement with friendly nations, factions, and personnel; and how it has often been called upon to fight and *prevail* when other indirect

⁹² Basil H. Liddell Hart, *Strategy*, (New York: Signet, 1974) 25-26.

means were ineffective or deemed inappropriate. Linking tactics to strategy is essential in every military operation, however due to the sensitivity of missions and the autonomy given to special operations, it is imperative that special operators understand the strategic nature of their assigned mission and the global impacts resulting thereof. This linkage can be summed up by one of the greatest theorists on unconventional warfare, Sun Tzu: “Strategy without tactics is the slowest route to victory. Tactics without strategy is the noise before defeat.”⁹³

⁹³ Sun Tzu, *The Art of War*, circa 500 BC, found at <http://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/quotes/s/suntzu129845.html> accessed on 1 Nov 2006.

10. CONCLUSION

In many ways, today's world is different from eras of the past; in many ways the world is all too familiar. The fact is, it is what it is; and as a country, the United States must act as a righteous leader in promoting the pillars of freedom, justice, and human dignity and confronting the challenges of the times. Thomas Friedman makes the point:

The flattening of the world...has presented us with new opportunities, new challenges, new partners but also, alas, new dangers, particularly as Americans. It is imperative that we find the right balance among all of these. It is imperative that we be the best global citizens that we can be – because in a flat world, if you don't visit a bad neighborhood, it might visit you. And it is imperative that while we remain vigilant to the new threats, we do not let them paralyze us.⁹⁴

The complexities of this world require leaders in every capacity to think through issues and address them from a multidimensional, integrated, holistic stance.

Undoubtedly, militaries serve as a key instrument of power; some might argue that in the United States, the military is a *source* of power. However, it is only one source. It certainly offers the political leadership a versatile instrument to shape, deter, and act on problems which range from disaster relief to force on force warfare. But the employment of the military must be a graduated, albeit deliberate decision in which the other means did not suffice and the consequences have been measured. Vigilance, as Friedman attests, is critical to ensuring that a free way of life can be pursued globally.

The alternative is a global society as depicted in Chapter 4 (Figure 4, bottom right) in which one ideology – an oppressive one by most western standards – rules all. The alternative is a world in which life has no value, that is, it is not celebrated and when extinct is not mourned. Letting the enemies of the United States achieve their ultimate

⁹⁴ Thomas Friedman, *The World is Flat*, (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 2005), 468.

objectives results in a world in which Islamic extremists set society back centuries in terms of progress toward equality, dignity, and individual rights by using terrorism to coerce.

To combat this threat the United States has adopted a comprehensive attack on the terrorist networks throughout the world, by engaging partner nations, employing all of its elements of national power, and specifically using the military in a capacity appropriate to the threat. To be sure, the preponderance of military forces deployed are focused on Afghanistan and Iraq, but the threat remains elsewhere, and that is where military planners who are looking to the future are focused. That is where the Special Operations Forces of the United States remain engaged. SOF provides that incremental level of forward presence in which the United States conducts shaping and deterrence operations. In an asymmetric environment, SOF is aptly suited to lead the graduated effort of military involvement.

SOF, while a very capable and effective force, must continue to break down the barriers both in and out of the interagency community to most effectively conduct their core missions. Unilateralism, when conducting operations in small elements in forward locations, sets up a recipe for friction and failure from the start. SOF must capitalize on partnerships with other government agencies to capitalize on lateral integration rather than historical models of stove-piped horizontal architectures. JIATFs and JIACGs are a move in the right direction toward standardized conformity, however, so long as they remain optional to the commanders, they will always be subject to personalities and therefore vulnerable to extinction. Furthermore, training with multinational partners has been beneficial in many regards. It has allowed sharing of tactics, techniques and

procedures, but it also eases the burden off of the United States by empowering other allied nations to protect themselves and the interests which are aligned with those of the United States.

In the context of large scale deployments such as OIF and OEF in which conventional forces are engaged in the same time and space as SOF, these elements must also work toward mutual relationships in which they can operate together regardless of the supported/supporting roles. Liaison officers and exchanges provide a needed link toward information sharing and cultural understanding, but placing officers and noncommissioned officers on staffs is a necessary, but incremental step. At the operator levels, more bilateral training is needed. The dynamic environment when deployed forward is not the time for units to attempt to bypass the crawl-walk phase of operations. Home station training, particularly collective, combined arms, and joint training are highly recommended. The reader should not take this to mean that this training is all focused on maneuvering combat formations and assaulting objectives. Understanding how to shape and influence the environment is just as critical as winning the gunfight, if not more so.

USSOCOM's methodology for planning and executing the global war on terrorism lends most of its efforts toward shaping and influencing the environment, vice more directed action approaches. It acknowledges the long term effects of focusing efforts toward the non-kinetic methodology as a desired campaign, and using kinetic options when the situation dictates. Much of this campaign relies on other government agencies, international organizations, private companies, as well as SOF organizations which seldom receive notoriety, but offer very powerful alternatives to leaders. The Civil

Affairs and Psychological Operations troops provide some of the most influential effects to the operational environment. Staffs often fail to completely understand the impact these specialties bring to the plan. They need to be smart on the vast effects created by a PSYOPS campaign, or how a civil-military plan can enhance relations and gain support from local populaces. To be sure, some operations will require the use of force to compel an enemy to submit, but in the long term, shaping the environment, making it inhospitable for the enemy to recruit and operate, and winning the support of the world will provide lasting effects which will move toward achieving the strategy of the United States: peace, justice and human dignity. To be most effective, however, doctrine needs to support what is happening in the field.

JP 3-05 is a publication in need of a rewrite, particularly in light of the fact that SOF has been used so extensively in the recent past. It must take an in-depth look at how to standardize TSOC employments as well as consider writing how to integrate conventional forces and interagency groups into JSOTFs. This is not an attempt to take latitude away from commanders to exercise their right to organize their staffs at their discretion, but it should provide a skeleton framework from which to build. It should also discuss supported/supporting relationships when SOF is in the lead or supporting roles.

Finally, SOF bears a tremendous burden for enacting national strategy. It should be commended for its efforts in recent years to lead the GWOT without falling prey to the reputation of “pariah cowboys.” Indeed they have lived up to their moniker of “quiet professionals” more than ever. The SOF community must continue to strive to synchronize the Joint efforts of the U.S. military, foreign forces, and much of the

interagency community toward achieving the national strategy, particularly as it applies to the war on terror. Acknowledging that even the U.S. government struggles with this interagency integration, USSOCOM is commended for the successes they have gained. Perhaps in the future their successes will embolden policy makers to enact the Goldwater-Nichols II interagency reform act. To further achieve one Joint effort, vertical stove-piping of the past must make way for horizontal leveling to share information, open lines of communication and make the interagency a singular interdependent arm of power of the United States government. Until such time, the Special Operations Forces of the U.S. military will continue to be heavily relied upon to range the continuum of conflict and act to achieve the strategic objectives of the nation set out by the National Command Authority.

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VITAE

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